**Alcohol Brain Damage – What You Need To Know**

**Alcohol Brain Damage**

People who abuse alcohol are at significant risk for alcohol brain damage. While it is true that alcohol alone may kill brain cells, this is not the reason for this particular kind of brain damage.

**Long Term Effects of Alcohol**

If you abuse alcohol for an extended period of time, you may not have the best diet. You might not have the money to spend on healthy food because you spend it on alcohol, or you may just not care about what you are eating because you are so focused on consuming alcohol. In any case, malnutrition can be a severe problem in alcoholics.

The problem is that these poor eating habits can lead to a deficiency in thiamine (vitamin B), which can cause severe and irreversible brain damage. Without enough Vitamin B1, the brain cannot metabolize glucose, and it is unable to function correctly. This leads to shrinkage in the neurons in the brain. This deficiency and brain damage is known as Wernicke-Korsakoff Syndrome, which is technically two different syndromes. Many doctors look at them as different stages of the same syndrome.

**Wernicke Encephalopathy**

The first, Wernicke Encephalopathy, occurs due to a lack of thiamine (vitamin B1). Before someone has a full-blown diagnosis of Korsakoff’s Syndrome, they usually suffer from Wernicke’s Encephalopathy. The symptoms of Wernicke’s Encephalopathy include:

* Involuntary eye movements
* Lack of coordination in the muscles
* Impaired movements of the eyes
* Confusion
* Balance and movement issues

These symptoms often go unnoticed in heavy alcohol users because they associate them with being drunk, or they don’t notice them at all. If someone notices these symptoms and is diagnosed with Wernicke’s Encephalopathy, they can usually be treated with thiamine.

Of course, if they continue to drink and aren’t receiving enough thiamine, the condition will happen again and eventually progress into Korsakoff’s Syndrome. Once someone has Korsakoff’s Syndrome, recovery is very unlikely.

**Alcohol Brain Damage -Symptoms of Korsakoff ’s Syndrome**

Alcohol can block the body from absorbing the necessary vitamins that it needs to function properly. In some cases, Korsakoff’s Syndrome can be caused by malnutrition without alcohol abuse, but the more common cause of this is alcohol brain damage is due to severe alcohol abuse.

People who have a few drinks on the weekend and may not eat as well as they should are not the people who are getting Korsakoff’s Syndrome.

This irreversible brain damage is generally one of the effects of long-term heavy consumption of alcohol.

**The most obvious symptoms of Korsakoff’s Syndrome are:**

* Apathy
* Confusion
* Severe memory loss
* Confabulation (making up stories/taking guesses to fill in memory gaps)
* Hallucinations
* Difficulty understanding and processing information

It is not possible to diagnose this syndrome until someone has abstained from alcohol for a period of time. The symptoms of Korsakoff’s Syndrome are very similar to how a person would act while under the influence, so it would be too difficult to differentiate and make a diagnosis.

If someone with Korsakoff’s Syndrome stops drinking, the progression of this syndrome should stop. However, it is still unknown if they will recover any of their brain functioning or their memory. This syndrome is more commonly referred to as Wet Brain.

There are many reasons why people who abuse alcohol should seek treatment. Alcohol effects on the body can be devastating in many different ways. Alcohol brain damage is one of the serious long term effects of alcohol.