

Withdrawal states - alcohol abuse

Withdrawal state F10.3

A group of symptoms of variable clustering and severity occurring on absolute or relative withdrawal of a psychoactive substance **after persistent use of that substance**. The onset and course of the withdrawal state are **time-limited** and are **related to the type of psychoactive substance** and dose being used immediately before cessation or reduction of use. The withdrawal state may be complicated by convulsions.

Minor withdrawal

- 6-36 hours after last drink
- tremor, insomnia anxiety, palpitation, sweating, GI upset, headache
- lasts typically 1-2 days

Withdrawal seizures

- after 6-48 hours after last drink, are generally tonic-clonic seizures and single episodes

Alcoholic hallucinations

- 12-48 hours after last drink
- **consciousness is intact**, normal vitals but auditory and/or visual hallucinations (also tactile possible), delusions
- for 1-2 days

Delirium tremens

- **2-3 days after the last drop of alcohol**
- features of delirium (changes in consciousness, hallucinations) + autonomic instability (tachycardia, HT, anxiety, nausea, sweating), seizures, psychomotor agitation, tremor...
- visual and tactile hallucinations (mice, crawling insects)
- can last **1-5 days**

Treatment

- IV fluid therapy, electrolyte correction
- Thiamine for wernicke encephalopathy prophylaxis or treatment
- dextrose (sugars!!)
- other vitamins: folate, multivitamins)
- IV benzos for seizures and psychomotor agitation
 - long acting or short acting (the latter (LOR) for liver patients)
- others if indicated: anticonvulsants, antipsychotics