

## Substance Use, Abuse and Dependence

### Classification and Information on Substances

#### Alcohol

<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	There are basically three types of alcoholic drinks: beers, wines and liquor. Alcohol is the most frequently used of all the substances.
<b>MODE OF ADMINISTRATION</b>	Alcohol is ingested orally by drinking it.
<b>PRIMARY EFFECT</b>	Central nervous system depressant.
<b>SHORT-TERM EFFECTS</b>	<p>Alcohol affects the central nervous system directly. Once absorbed, it usually has the following effects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impairs concentration and judgment;</li> <li>• Reduces inhibitions and co-ordination;</li> <li>• Increases blood pressure and heart rate;</li> <li>• Decreases blood supply to the heart;</li> <li>• Dilates blood vessels in the limbs, causing body heat to escape;</li> <li>• Small doses can cause mild feelings of well-being;</li> <li>• Large doses can progressively depress mood and energy;</li> <li>• Large doses can cause nausea, headaches, and vomiting;</li> <li>• Large doses can cause a stupor, loss of control over critical bodily functions, intentional and non-intentional injury, coma or death.</li> </ul>
<b>LONG-TERM EFFECTS</b>	<p>Alcohol is toxic to the body. Long-term alcohol abuse is life shortening and life threatening:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Withdrawal (including tremors, seizures and hallucinations);</li> <li>• Gastrointestinal disorders (including duodenal ulcers, reflux and diarrhea);</li> <li>• Damage to the pancreas and kidneys;</li> <li>• Liver disease (including alcoholic fatty liver, hepatitis and cirrhosis);</li> <li>• Malnutrition and muscle wasting (including suppression of the immune system);</li> <li>• Neurological damage (including memory defects, hallucinations, blackouts and seizures);</li> <li>• Hormonal disorders (including impotence and infertility);</li> <li>• Psychiatric complications (including anxiety and depression);</li> <li>• Heart disease (including risk of heart failure and stroke);</li> <li>• Respiratory damage (including respiratory depression and failure, pneumonia, tuberculosis and lung abscesses);</li> <li>• Cancer (including mouth and throat);</li> <li>• Risk of injury.</li> </ul>
<b>ADDICTION POTENTIAL</b>	High psychological and physical addiction potential.
<b>TREATMENT OPTIONS</b>	Three general steps are involved in treating alcohol dependency – intervention (confronting denial), detoxification (management of possible withdrawal syndromes and ensuring rest, adequate nutrition and multiple vitamins), and rehabilitation (maintain abstinence and prevent a relapse). Treatment for alcohol dependence can occur in an inpatient and/or outpatient setting.