

Alcohol and Depression – Nutrient Deficiencies

As alcohol can suppress and relieve feelings of anxiety and make a person feel relaxed and calm, people often tend to drink larger quantities during periods of life unsettlement and bad misfortune. Using alcohol as a coping mechanism can be sign of alcohol abuse and consuming large amounts may be an indicator that someone is depressed or can cause depression. Studies have been conducted which have found substantial evidence of the link between serious alcohol use and depression. Questions still remain about whether the regular consumption of alcohol leads to depression or if people who are depressed are likely to drink. The triggers such as genetic or environmental risk factors are shared by both alcohol abuse and depression.

People that suffer from major depression have nearly one-third of a chance of developing an alcohol problem. Research also shows that children that develop depression during childhood have a higher risk of developing alcohol problems during their teen years. Teens also have a high risk of developing an alcohol problem if they experience a case of major depression. Constant drinking will make the effects of depression worsen and a person is likely to suffer from severe episodes and is more likely to consider suicide.

Nutrient Deficiencies

Thiamine deficiency is common in people who suffer from alcoholism and eat very minimally as their energy is being obtained through empty-kilojoule items such as alcohol that cannot provide adequate nutrients for the body. Alcohol also impairs thiamine absorption and instead increases the rate at which it is excreted out in urine. For alcohol to be metabolised in the body, thiamine is required.

Niacin is essential in the body for the metabolism of glucose, fats and alcohol and if consuming high amounts of alcohol there is a high chance that there will be a deficiency in niacin.

Alcohol can impact and increase the destruction and loss of vitamin B6 in the body, and early symptoms of vitamin B6 deficiency are depression and confusion.

Alcohol abuse also causes damage to the gastrointestinal (GI) track cells. This results in folate being lost from the body rather quickly developing a deficiency in folate and damage to the GI track. If deficient in folate, it is likely that you are deficient in vitamin B12, as vitamin B12 is used to convert folate into its active form in the body. A common deficiency symptom is anaemia of folate deficiency which often indicates a vitamin C deficiency as well.

Vitamin A and E are primarily stored in the liver, and as alcohol adds stress to the liver to be able to metabolise it, these fat soluble vitamins are depleted. The availability of vitamins A, D and E are also less readily available as alcohol reduces fat absorption. Drinking alcohol heavily can put you at a higher risk of vitamin K deficiency which could mean increased bleeding and the risk of broken bones.