

Booze and Blues

Alcohol abuse and depression can be a deadly mix.

Often, a person with depression will also have alcoholism, and vice versa. In fact, 30 percent to 50 percent of people with alcoholism, at any given time, also are suffering from major depression. Family history of depression or alcoholism puts a person at greater risk for developing either illness.

You should know that while alcohol often causes a "good mood" at first, it is a depression-causing drug.

Alcoholism and depression

Alcoholism may cause a relapse in people with depression. The depressive symptoms from alcohol are greatest when a person first stops drinking. So people recovering from alcoholism who have a history of depression should be carefully monitored during the early stages of withdrawal; the symptoms of depression are greatly reduced after three to four weeks of stopping drinking.

Higher risk for suicide

When a person suffers from major depression and abuses alcohol, he has a much higher risk of attempting and succeeding at suicide. Other facts:

- Alcohol abuse can exaggerate depression and increase impulsiveness.
- Alcohol frequently is detected in suicide methods involving driving a moving vehicle or overdosing.
- Alcohol impairs judgment, which explains its association with painful suicide methods.

Major depression and alcohol abuse are the most commonly diagnosed psychiatric disorders in people who attempt suicide. A recent study showed that following age, alcoholism and drug addictions are the most likely reasons for suicide attempts.

Because of the risk of suicide, if you are (or someone you care about is) suffering from major depression and abusing alcohol it is critical that you seek prompt medical attention.

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