

Clinical Psychology Associates of North Central Florida

Providing quality psychological and neuropsychological assessment, treatment and consultation services to the North Central Florida community.

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Alcohol Poisoning

According to the [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\) alcohol poisoning](#) is a medical emergency resulting from high blood alcohol levels that suppress the central nervous system (CNS) and can cause loss of consciousness, low blood pressure and body temperature, coma, respiratory depression, or death.

Nearly 2200 people die of alcohol poisoning in the U.S. each year. Nearly 3/4 of alcohol poisoning deaths are among adults ages 35 to 64.

Alcohol depresses the CNS which controls involuntary reflexes such as breathing and gag reflex. A fatal dose of alcohol can stop these reflexes. There is a danger of asphyxiation when a person vomits and then chokes on his or her own vomit. Blood alcohol levels continue to rise even after a person passes out so it is not safe to assume a person can just sleep off the effects of the alcohol. Binge drinking is the main cause of alcohol poisoning.

Signs of alcohol poisoning

- Confusion, stupor
- Vomiting
- Seizures
- Slow breathing (less than 8 breaths per minute is critical normal is 12-20)
- Irregular breathing (gap of 10 seconds or more between breaths)
- Blue tinged or pale skin
- Low body temperature
- Unconsciousness and can't be roused

It is not necessary for all of these symptoms to be present before you seek help. A person who is unconscious and can't be roused is at risk of dying.

What to do if you suspect alcohol poisoning

- Know the danger signs and don't wait for all to be present
- Be aware that a person who has passed out may die
- If there is any possibility of an alcohol overdose call 911 for help

Alcohol Poisoning

If left untreated...

- The victim can choke on his or her own vomit
- Breathing slows, becomes irregular, and can stop
- Heart beats irregularly or stops
- Low body temperature
- Low blood sugar levels can lead to seizures
- Untreated severe dehydration from vomiting can cause seizures, permanent brain damage, or death
- Even if a person lives they can suffer irreversible brain damage

[NIAAA: Alcohol Overdose: The Dangers of Drinking Too Much](#)

[Binge drinking \[VIDEO - 4:23 minutes\]](#)