



Myoclonus-Dystonia & Alcohol



Myoclonus-dystonia (M-D) is a neurological disorder characterized by rapid, jerking muscle contractions (myoclonus) and/or sustained, repetitive movements or postures (dystonia). Non-motor features may include mood and anxiety disorders. Individuals with M-D often have a special sensitivity to alcohol.

Alcohol May Reduce M-D Symptoms

One of the characteristics that makes M-D unique from other movement disorders is that consuming alcohol often results in a dramatic reduction in myoclonus symptoms and may also reduce dystonia symptoms.

M-D is a Risk Factor for Alcohol Abuse

A study has suggested that over 40% of individuals with M-D meet criteria for alcohol dependence. While the frequency of alcohol abuse can be attributed to the fact that individuals are motivated to drink because it makes them feel better, research is revealing it may be more complicated than that.

Individuals with M-D have a higher incidence of obsessive-compulsive disorder, with compulsivity being the predominant feature. This suggests the correlation between alcohol abuse and M-D may be more than a case of individuals trying to self-medicate; it may be related to the compulsivity that is a frequent component of the disorder. It may be inherently more difficult for individuals with M-D to drink in moderation.

Alcohol abuse and alcoholism are common among people of all backgrounds. There are many risk factors that make certain people more susceptible to the damaging effects of alcohol: drinking at a young age, family history, social expectations, depression, and anxiety. Having M-D is one of these risk factors.

Alcohol is Damaging Over Time

Alcohol is a depressant, which means it slows the function of the central nervous system. Alcohol acts on the brain in ways that, over time, can degrade its ability to make muscles relax—which is already a problem for those with M-D. Long term use of alcohol ultimately reduces the effects of alcohol and makes certain medications less effective. The combination of alcohol and medications can be damaging or deadly.

While alcohol may appear to be beneficial for M-D in the short term because it temporarily lessens symptoms, it is damaging over time.

Help is Available

If you are concerned about your drinking, or that of a loved one, consider discussing your concerns with your medical or mental health care provider.

About the DMRF

The Dystonia Medical Research Foundation (DMRF) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to advancing research for more dystonia treatments and ultimately a cure, promoting awareness, and supporting the well-being of affected individuals and families.

<http://www.dystonia-foundation.org>

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