Assessment of Alcohol Withdrawal Symptoms During COVID-19

Across the state, liquor stores have been closed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, posing greater risk to those impacted by substance use. Reduced access to alcohol, combined with the lack of available local in-person AA/NA meetings due to location closures, can lead to an increased rate of individuals experiencing life threatening symptoms of alcohol withdrawal.

- Alcohol withdrawal can occur between 6 and 48 hours after heavy alcohol consumption decreases and can intensify after 24 hours
- Symptoms of Alcohol Withdrawal Include headache, tremor, sweating, agitation, anxiety and irritability, nausea vomiting, heightened sensitivity to light and sound, disorientation, difficulty concentrating, hallucinations, increased blood pressure and heart rate, as well as shaking and seizures.

What to do when you notice someone experiencing possible withdrawal symptoms?

Identify a safe and quiet area to reduce external stimuli that can intensify withdrawal symptoms.

TOOLS TO USE

SBIRT
Clinicians and staff members will use SBIRT when an individual is at risk for withdrawal.

**Screen:** Ask the individual for risky substance use

**Brief Intervention:** Give information and engage the individual around readiness for treatment

**Referral to Treatment:** Identify treatment source and assist with making a referral

CIWA-Ar

Clinicians and staff members will use CIWA-Ar when an individual is observed to be actively exhibiting withdrawal symptoms. A score indicating greater than 10 points must result in immediate medical attention.

- Scores of 8 or less (very mild withdrawal) – provide supportive care and link to resources
  - PA Get Help Now - 1-800-662-HELP, smartrecovery.org; For Virtual AA/Al-Anon Aaonlinemeeting.net, Onlinegroupaa.org
- Score of 9 to 14 points indicate mild withdrawal symptoms
  - PCP or Local Emergency Room, UPMC Addiction Medicine - 412-246-5278, Jade Wellness Center (412)380-0100
- Score of 15 to 20 points indicate moderate withdrawal symptoms
  - Local Emergency Room, UPMC Addiction Medicine, Gateway Rehab Detox Unit - 724-782-4033 Intake Department, Greenbriar Treatment Center – 1(800)637-4673, Jade Wellness Center (412)380-0100
- Score greater than 20 points indicate severe withdrawal symptoms
  - Local Emergency Room, UPMC Addiction Medicine, Gateway Rehab Detox Unit - 724-782-4033 Intake Department, Greenbriar Treatment Center – 1(800)637-4673

As a reminder, Auberle’s Behavioral Health therapists are able to complete a D&A level of care assessment to determine the appropriate treatment for an individual when they are not in active withdrawal.