



## **Protracted & Post-Acute Withdrawal**

**Protracted Withdrawal** is a set of impairments that occur immediately after acute withdrawal from Alcohol (ETOH) and other substances of abuse. These symptoms are similar to those experienced during acute withdrawal but are typically less severe.

- Symptoms *may start 7 to 14 days after stopping* the addictive substance and peak over 3 to 6 months.
- Symptoms may worsen during times of stress and will often occur at set times.
- Contact your Provider to discuss medications that can help with these symptoms.

### **Post-Acute Withdrawal (PAWS)**

- Symptoms appear to cycle for alcohol dependence. Cycles happen around days 30, 60, 90, 120, 180 and also appear around the 1- and 2-year marks of sobriety.
- Even with treatment, the body needs at least one year to return to normal physical functions.
- Emotions and brain functions may take at least two years to return to normal.

### **Common Symptoms of PAWS:**

- The inability to think clearly – One may have trouble with problem solving and concentration.
- Problems with memory – Forgetfulness and the inability to remember recently learned information (within the last 30 minutes).
- Emotions may be over-active or numb – Emotions can be out of proportion to the occurrence. May lose control and do something rash or impulsive. Emotions may shut down and there may be a numb feeling. There may be mood swings.
- Sleep problems – Trouble sleeping, staying asleep or awaking early. Changes in sleep patterns. Dreams that disrupt sleep and are often about using.
- Coordination problems – Dizziness, trouble with balance, problems with hand and eye coordination, a slowing of reflexes causing one to be clumsy and prone to accidents.

### **Managing PAWS symptoms:**

Exercise can help to rebuild the body, keep it functioning properly and reduce stress. While stress triggers and intensifies post-acute withdrawal, learning to manage stress can help control PAWS. There are diversions that can be used as natural stress reducers such as massage, meditation, yoga, music, reading, self-soothing exercises, prayer etc...

Hunger & lack of sufficient sleep produces stress. Try to plan your schedule and do not skip meals. Three well-balanced meals a day with three nutritious snacks daily are recommended. Avoid caffeine and sugar, especially four hours before bed. Talk to people who are not going to accuse, criticize or minimize your experience. You need to talk about what you are experiencing even if it seems irrational and unfounded. Ask someone if you are making sense. Learning about PAWS, the addictive disease, and recovery helps to relieve the anxiety, guilt and confusion that tends to create the stress that intensifies PAWS. Please understand that these are a normal part of the recovery process. Discuss symptoms with your Provider, recovery counselor, sponsor and/or recovery group.