

## Alcohol Cravings Induced via Increased Serotonin

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There is an alarming connection between alcoholism and the various prescription drugs that increase serotonin. The most popular of those drugs are: PROZAC, ZOLOFT, PAXIL, LUVOX, SERZONE, EFFEXOR, ANAFRANIL, and the new diet pills, FEN-PHEN and REDUX. For seven years numerous reports have been made by reformed alcoholics (some for 15 years and longer) who are being "driven" to alcohol again after being prescribed one of these drugs. And many other patients who had no previous history of alcoholism have continued to report an "overwhelming compulsion" to drink while using these drugs.

(A few personal accounts: #1 A young woman, a recovering alcoholic, reported that during the eight month period she had been using Prozac she found it necessary to attend AA meetings every day in order to fight off the strong compulsions to begin drinking again. #2 In the Southeastern United States a middle aged psychologist, also a recovering alcoholic, after being prescribed Prozac, found herself needing to attend AA meetings morning, noon, and night to keep from destroying the sobriety she had achieved. #3 A young father, who was Mormon and had never before in his life used alcohol, found himself drinking Ever Clear and exhibiting bizarre as well as violent behavior, after being prescribed Prozac and Ritalin. #4 A young mother who had never used alcohol before began drinking large amounts within weeks of being prescribed Prozac and quickly found herself committed to a mental institution due to the psychotic behavior that resulted. Added to her Prozac prescription were anti-psychotic meds and electric shock treatments. She then began to experience seizures and was started on anti-seizure meds. #5 A concerned neighbor reported her friend was drinking straight Vodka on a regular basis after being prescribed Zoloft. #6 A daughter reported her father, sober for 15 years, began drinking again on Prozac. The consistent report from these patients has been an "overwhelming craving or compulsion" for alcohol.)

For some time we did not have specific medical documentation to help us understand why this was happening. Could it be that Prozac, Zoloft, Paxil, etc., being mood altering substances, were removing the inhibitions that individuals had placed upon themselves to stop their additions? But beyond this mood altering effect of Prozac, etc., there seemed to be a physiological cause for this alcoholic obsession as well. There were reports of people who rarely drank before Prozac, etc., consuming excessive amounts of alcohol after starting usage of these various drugs. For example we have the case of a young newly wed in Southern Utah who was given Prozac for a hormonal imbalance. Before that time she would have two or three social drinks a year, yet soon after being prescribed Prozac she began bringing alcohol home by the case. Many similar reports followed.

Could it be that because these drugs have such a strong adverse effect upon the pancreas [Manufacturer's warnings include such side effects as hypoglycemia, diabetes and pancreatitis.] they are producing a potent disruption in the body's blood sugar balance? This would in turn cause a "craving" for alcohol as the body reaches out for a "quick fix" to raise the blood sugar level thus triggering a vicious self-perpetuating cycle as the alcohol pushes the blood sugar level even lower after the brief high it produces. This means that those suffering a tendency toward alcoholism or any other blood sugar disorder would suffer the most disastrous repercussions of Prozac, etc., (including psychosis, suicidal ideation and violence) much faster than most. Patient reports support this conclusion.

In November of 1994 Yale published a study that gave us one answer to the alcohol cravings associated with these drugs. The study demonstrated that an increase in brain levels of either of two neurotransmitters (brain hormones), serotonin or noradrenalin, produces: #1 a craving for alcohol, #2 anger, #3 anxiety. They found this to be especially true for those who have a history of alcoholism. All of the drugs listed above are designed in one way or another to increase serotonin which in turn also increases noradrenalin. Anyone who has a history of alcoholism should heed the warning contained in these reports. And anyone who has developed a problem with alcoholism while using these drugs deserves answers as to why they have experienced such an overwhelming compulsion to drink.

America already has an estimated 10 -15 million alcoholics. To increase that number with a reaction from prescription drugs which causes a compulsion to drink is a tragedy! What a sad state of affairs that drugs which are actually being promoted as a treatment for alcoholism have the potential to create alcohol craving behavior. This is not only frightening, but absurd. It is heart-rending to listen to those who have had years of sobriety destroyed almost overnight or those who have never touched alcohol before Prozac, yet began drinking compulsively due to a medication prescribed by doctors unfamiliar with this connection. By chemically inducing an overwhelming urge to drink this effect also causes patients to mix alcohol with these powerful drugs. When alcohol and drugs are combined, one can compound the effects of the other so the resulting impairment is far worse than if the two were taken separately...even small amounts, mixed with some medicines, will deaden your senses or change your perceptions which can lead to psychotic behavior, seizures, etc. Those in this situation need to be made aware that they are not alone, and that this is a common report which is now substantiated by medical documentation. They also need to understand that it is possible to very gradually withdraw from these drugs and overcome these adverse drug reactions.