

Somatic Comorbidities of Opioid Addiction

Addicted patients:

- Rarely take advantage of preventive examinations when they are available
- Commonly suffer from malnutrition
- Frequently have poor dental condition

The rate of infective diseases is high among substance abuse patients. As a result, regular checks of virological status are indispensable. The most important infections to test for are the hepatitis viruses (A, B, and C) and the HI virus.

Other conditions that are common among substance abusers:

SKIN

Abscesses and phlegmon (esp. on the forearms) can occur as a result of intravenous substance consume with needles contaminated with microbes.

Necrotic Infections can occur as a result of the intracutaneous or subcutaneous application of vessel constricting substances (esp. cocaine). They leave drawn in scars on atrophied skin.

Body Lice (Pediculus vestimentorum) can cause reddening, swelling small nodules, itching, scratch marks, erosions, and superficial ulcerations with secondary infections.

Scabies tunnel in calluses in the skin. The main symptom is itching, esp. when the infected person is in a warm bed.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)

Syphilis (Treponema pallidum) infections go through several stages:

- Primary syphilis begins on the site of contact and is seen as painless, tough nodules in the anogenital area or in other locations. These nodules heal without treatment.
- Secondary syphilis begins 7-10 weeks later and is characterized by swelling of the lymph nodes, a typical rash, and characteristic forms of hair loss. Flu-like symptoms are also common. From this stage, syphilis can either heal or go over into the next stage.
- Tertiary syphilis is diagnosis through skin infiltrations and gummas in some internal organs, bones and connective tissues.
- Latent syphilis is the final stage and causes progressive paralysis with personality changes and dementia. These symptoms are caused by the infection of the nervous system.
- It is important to note that infections with syphilis during pregnancy can lead to miscarriages (in early pregnancy) or congenital syphilis infections in the child. It is possible to infect the baby during birth.

Gonorrhea presents with different symptoms and consequences in the different sexes.

- Men experience a discharge and risk an infection of the testicles.
- Women experience a burning or itching sensation during urination or are symptom free. The infection may move up the genital tract and lead to infertility if untreated.

Herpes simplex virus Type I/II infections can present as blisters on the infected area or as superficial ulcerations.

Gynecological Problems

Amenorrhea is the absence of menstruation.

Other Medical Problems

Infective Diseases:

- Hepatitis A, B, C
- HIV/AIDS

Heart Problems

- Cardiac arrhythmias (e.g. QT elongations, Torsades des pointes)
- Heart valve damage through contaminants of substances that are applied intravenous
- Sudden cardiac death after cocaine use

Liver Diseases

- Cirrhoses as a result of alcohol abuse or chronic infection with the hepatitis C virus
- Cancer of the liver

Pulmonary Diseases

- Diseases of the lungs as a result of smoking