

## Right n. 8: The Right of the Stomach

حق البطن

وَأَمَّا حَقُّ بَطْنِكَ فَأَنْ لَا تَجْعَلَهُ وَعَاءً لِقَلِيلٍ مِنَ الْحَرَامِ وَلَا لِكَثِيرٍ، وَأَنْ تَقْتَصِدَ لَهُ فِي الْحَلَالِ وَلَا تُخْرِجَهُ مِنْ حَدِّ التَّقْوِيَةِ إِلَى حَدِّ التَّهْوِينِ وَذَهَابِ الْمُرُوَّةِ، وَضَبْطُهُ إِذَا هَمَّ بِالْجُوعِ وَالظَّمْأِ فَإِنَّ الشَّبْعَ الْمُنْتَهِي بِصَاحِبِهِ إِلَى التَّخْمِ مَكْسَلَةٌ وَمُنْبَطَةٌ وَمَقْطَعَةٌ عَنْ كُلِّ بَرٍّ وَكَرَمٍ. وَإِنَّ الرِّيَّ الْمُنْتَهِي بِصَاحِبِهِ إِلَى السُّكْرِ مَسْخَفَةٌ وَمَجْهَلَةٌ وَمَذْهَبَةٌ لِلْمُرُوَّةِ.

And the right of your stomach is that you make it not into a container for a little of that which is unlawful to you or a lot of it. You should be determined to eat what is lawful and not exceed the bounds of strengthening to the extent of belittling your stomach<sup>1</sup> to the point that you lose your manliness. And you should restrain it whenever you are extremely hungry or thirsty, since getting really full will cause indigestion, sluggishness, indolence, and it will hinder you from nobility and any good deeds. And drinking too much will make you feel drunk, light-headed, ignorant, and take away your manliness.

Imam Sajjad has described our stomach as a container for food that we must fill with moderation. We must only fill it with legitimate foods and drinks. We should do all we can to strengthen ourselves, but we should not forget moderation.

### Man Needs Food

All men need food. We cannot survive if our food supplies are cut off. Some people thought that the Prophet did not need to eat food. The Holy Qur'an rejects this idea and says:

وَمَا جَعَلْنَاهُمْ جَسَدًا لَا يَأْكُلُونَ الطَّعَامَ وَمَا كَانُوا خَالِدِينَ

**“Nor did We give them bodies that ate no food, nor were they exempt from death.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Anbiyaa 21:8]**

In another verse of the Holy Qur’an we read:

وَقَالُوا مَالِ هَذَا الرَّسُولِ يَأْكُلُ الطَّعَامَ وَيَمْشِي فِي الْأَسْوَاقِ لَوْلَا أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْنَا مَلَكٌ فَيَكُونُ مَعَهُ نَذِيرًا

**“And they say: “What sort of an apostle is this, who eats food, and walks through the streets? Why has not an angel been sent down to him to give admonition with him?” [The Holy Qur’an, al-Furqan 25:7]**

The Qur’an instructs us to think about our need to eat:

ثُمَّ شَقَقْنَا الْأَرْضَ شَقًّا أَنَا صَبَبْنَا الْمَاءَ صَبًّا فَلْيَنْظُرِ الْإِنْسَانُ إِلَى طَعَامِهِ

**“Then let man look at his food, (and how We provide it): For that We pour forth water in abundance, and We split the earth in fragments...” [The Holy Qur’an, Abasa 80:24–26]**

The food we eat becomes the closest thing to us. After we eat something, it changes somewhat and part of it gets absorbed and turns into energy and some of it is taken to our cells or stored somewhere in the body and becomes a part of us. We will die of hunger if we cannot get enough food to eat. That is why the Holy Qur’an has placed a special emphasis on food ingredients, and more importantly on plants and vegetables. Have you thought about what is meant by “let man look at his food” in the above verse?

Obviously, it does not mean that we should just look and see what we eat. This means that we should carefully study the structure and makeup of our foods’ ingredients, and consider how each affects our body. Then we should think about how food is prepared for us by God through a renewable cycle of creation. Some people have stressed the need to consider whether it is obtained legitimately or not.

In the traditions from the Immaculate Imams the food for the mind has been stressed – that is we should be careful about how we acquire our knowledge. Imam Baqir said: “You should carefully consider from whom you acquire knowledge.”<sup>2</sup>

Imam Sadiq has also stressed this point. When we look at the verse and see what follows in the above verse, we can realize that food for the body is implied, because there is a discussion of rain, splitting the earth, and the flourishing of plants which make up our food. Of course, we should consider both – food for the body and food for the mind. We should see how revelations to the hearts of the Prophets bear fruits that are then stored in the hearts of the Immaculate Imams . Then this knowledge pours out, reaches the hearts of the believers, and yields the fruits of faith and piety.<sup>3</sup>

## Who Creates Food

There are several verses in the Holy Qur'an regarding the creation of foods and drinks.

أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا تَحْرُثُونَ أَأَنْتُمْ تَزْرَعُونَهُ أَمْ نَحْنُ الزَّارِعُونَ لَوْ نَشَاءُ لَجَعَلْنَاهُ حُطَامًا فَظَلْتُمْ تَفَكَّهُونَ

***“See ye the seed that ye sow in the ground? Is it ye that cause it to grow, or are We the Cause? Were it Our Will, We could crumble it to dry powder, and ye would be left in wonderment.” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Waqi'ah 56:63-65]***

Notice how it is stressed that the people plant the seeds in the ground, but it is God who makes them grow. The Prophet said:

لَا يَقُولَنَّ أَحَدُكُمْ "زَرَعْتُ" وَلْيَقُلْ "حَرَثْتُ"، فَإِنَّ الزَّارِعَ هُوَ اللَّهُ

*“Do not say: I grew the plants. Say: I planted the seeds. This is because it is God who makes them grow.”<sup>4</sup>*

Thus, we are reminded that God is the Creator of all things. If He wills, He can destroy whatever we plant.

In the next verse, we can see the stress on the creation and source of the water that we drink:

أَفَرَأَيْتُمُ الْمَاءَ الَّذِي تَشْرَبُونَ أَأَنْتُمْ أَنْزَلْتُمُوهُ مِنَ الْمُزْنِ أَمْ نَحْنُ الْمُنزِلُونَ لَوْ نَشَاءُ جَعَلْنَاهُ أُجَاجًا فَلَوْلَا تَشْكُرُونَ

***“See ye the water which ye drink? Do ye bring it down (in rain) from the cloud or do We? Were it Our Will, We could make it salt (and unpalatable): then why do ye not give thanks?” [The Holy Qur'an, al-Waqi'ah 56:68-70]***

Here we are called in to judge ourselves on who creates water and brings down the rain, makes the rivers flow, makes the plants grow, and produces our food. Hopefully we can realize the Majesty of God.

## Psychological Effects of Food

Scientists agree that food has both good and bad physical and psychological effects on us. Research laboratories are well-equipped to measure the chemical composition of foodstuff and how they affect our body. However, the psychological effects of what we eat have not yet been totally measured. Imam Sadiq said:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ تَبَارَكَ وَتَعَالَى لَمْ يُبِحْ أَكْلًا وَلَا شُرْبًا إِلَّا لِمَا فِيهِ الْمَنْفَعَةُ وَالصَّلَاحُ، وَلَمْ يُحَرِّمْ إِلَّا مَا فِيهِ الضَّرُّ وَالتَّلَفُ وَالْفَسَادُ.

*“The Almighty God only allowed some things for us to eat and drink due to their benefit and good effects on us, and only forbade us some things due to their harmfulness and ill effects.”<sup>5</sup>*

The leaders of Islam have all been concerned about the good and bad physical and psychological effects of what we eat and drink.

## Drinking Blood Makes One Ruthless

Imam Sadiq expressed the reason why it is forbidden to drink blood:

شَرِبُ الدَّمِ يُسَيِّءُ الْخُلُقَ وَيُورِثُ الْقَسْوَةَ لِلْقَلْبِ وَقِلَّةَ الرَّأْفَةِ وَالرَّحْمَةَ وَلَا يُؤْمِنُ أَنْ يُقْتَلَ وَلَدُهُ وَوَالِدُهُ.

*“Drinking blood will make you bad-tempered and ruthless. It will reduce your kindness and mercy so much that you might even kill your own son or father.”<sup>6</sup>*

## The Effects of Drinking Wine

Imam Sadiq expressed the reason why we are forbidden to drink wine or alcoholic drinks:

إِنَّ مُدْمِنَ الْخَمْرِ كَعَابِدٍ وَثَنٍ، وَيُورِثُهُ الْارْتِعَاشَ وَيَهْدِمُ مَرْوَتَهُ وَتَحْمِلُهُ عَلَى أَنْ يَجْسُرَ عَلَى الْمَحَارِمِ مِنْ سَفْكِ الدِّمَاءِ وَرُكُوبِ الزَّيْنَا، وَلَا يُؤْمِنُ إِذَا سَكِرَ أَنْ يَثْبَعَ عَلَى مَحَارِمِهِ.

*“An alcoholic is like an idol-worshipper. It (alcohol) causes him to tremble and his manliness is destroyed. It induces him to venture into what is forbidden such as bloodshed and fornication. Moreover, even his closest relatives are not secure from being molested by him when he is drunk.”<sup>7</sup>*

## The Physical Effects of Alcohol

Alcohol can easily enter the bloodstream after consumption and can quickly spread throughout the body. Alcohol has a profound effect on almost every organ and system in the body.<sup>8</sup>

1 Alcohol will influence our brain<sup>9</sup> and disable our brain cells. It might cause the rupturing of the fine blood veins, coagulation of blood, or stoppage of the circulation of blood in the brain. Thus, it will lead to a partial or a severe brain stroke that will sometimes cause a drop in blood pressure and result in paralysis.<sup>10</sup>

2 Alcohol will cause various illnesses such as shaking of the hands or the feet, lack of control of our

body parts,[11](#) and weakness of our senses.[12](#) It also causes insomnia.[13](#)

3 Alcohol will harm the tongue and our sense of taste. It will reduce the amount of saliva and cause a disorder in its reproduction. It will also cause stomach upset, indigestion, throwing up mixed with clogged blood. It will cause many illnesses in our stomach and intestine and result in ulcer and serious diarrhea.

4 It will weaken the liver,[14](#) and cause it to swell. It will harden the kidneys and cause pain in the stomach. It might even cause jaundice.[15](#)

5 Alcohol is not usable in the body. Therefore, if we drink, it will enter our blood stream and destroy the white blood cells. It might even cause such a drop in our blood pressure that we might have a brain stroke.

6 One of the major ill effects of drinking alcohol is its influence on the lungs. Alcohol will travel along with our blood stream into our lungs, and it will irritate the lung and cause it to swell. This will result in destruction of calcium and end in tuberculosis.

7 Another ill effect of drinking alcohol is damage to the cardiovascular system.[16](#)

## Alcohol Causes Insanity

Alcoholic drinks are the main cause of insanity. The statistics[17](#) show that most insane people are those who have been drinking for many years in their life. There are nearly two hundred thousand such cases in France. Nearly ninety percent of the insanities in England have been alcohol related.[18](#)

## Genetic Effects of Alcohol

Alcohol has a bad effect on the cells of a baby. A German scientist has proved that this influence will genetically affect three generations, even if they do not drink.[19](#) That is why Islam has forbidden drinking alcohol. Imam Sajjad stressed that we should keep our stomachs void of forbidden things. The Prophet said:

مَلْعُونٌ مَنْ جَلَسَ عَلَى مَائِدَةٍ يُشْرَبُ عَلَيْهَا الْخَمْرُ.

*“Whoever sits with those who are drinking is deprived of God’s Mercy.”[20](#)*

Ayatollah Dastghayb quoted from Sayyid Abul Ali Mawdoody’s Tanghā: “The U.S. government used many ways to fight alcoholism. It used magazines, newspapers, lectures, and seminars, even movies to combat alcoholism. It spent more than eight million dollars, and published more than ten million pages of advertisement against it. Over a period of fourteen years, it spent over two hundred fifty million dollars to enforce the law to abolish alcoholic beverages.

It imprisoned three hundred and thirty-five persons, fined people over sixteen million dollars, and seized over four hundred and fifty million dollars' worth of property. All this was of no use. It finally gave up and abolished that law in 1932 and totally freed drinking alcohol.”[21](#)

On the other hand, even though drinking alcoholic beverages was like drinking water for the Arabs in the Age of Ignorance, when Islam came it forbade drinking alcohol and abolished it in a very short time. Thus, it saved Muslims from all the ill effects of alcohol and alcoholism. Scientists today are well aware of the physical effects of alcohol. However, they cannot measure its moral impacts on the loss of manliness and moral values.

Some people are careful about the cleanliness of their living quarters, and the suitability of their food. Should they suspect the least bit of poisoning in their food, they will refuse to eat it. However, they do not care at all about their spiritual well-being, and listen to anything. Imam Ali said:

مَالِي أَرَى النَّاسَ إِذَا قُرِبَ إِلَيْهِمُ الطَّعَامُ تَكَلَّفُوا إِنَارَةَ الْمَصَابِيحِ لِيُبْصِرُوا مَا يُدْخِلُونَ بُطُونَهُمْ وَلَا يَهْتَمُونَ بِغِذَاءِ النَّفْسِ  
بَأَنْ يُنِيرُوا مَصَابِيحَ أَلْبَابِهِمْ بِالْعِلْمِ لِيَسْلَمُوا مِنْ لَوَاحِقِ الْجَهَالَةِ وَالذُّنُوبِ فِي اعْتِقَادَاتِهِمْ وَأَعْمَالِهِمْ؟

*“I am amazed at the people who turn on the light to see what they eat when they want to dine in the dark, but do not care about food for their mind. They do not care to illuminate their intellect with the light of knowledge to be safe from making mistakes out of ignorance and wrong beliefs.”[22](#)*

Imam Hasan said:

عَجِبْتُ لِمَنْ يَتَفَكَّرُ فِي مَأْكُولِهِ كَيْفَ لَا يَتَفَكَّرُ فِي مَعْقُولِهِ فَيُجِيبَ بَطْنَهُ مَا يُؤْذِيهِ وَيُودِعَ صَدْرَهُ مَا يُرْدِيهِ

*“I am amazed at the people who consider what they eat but do not think about the food for their mind. They guard their stomachs from harmful things, but do not guard their hearts and minds against things that will harm them.”*

There are many traditions in Islam about proper diet, and proper things to eat or drink. There is a lot of information about useful or harmful meats, fats, sweets, confectioneries, beans and vegetables. Suayd ibn Ghofleh went to see Imam Ali once at lunchtime.

He narrated: “I saw that Imam Ali was sitting down around the tablecloth with a dried piece of bread made of whole barley. I went to his servants and asked them why they were so inconsiderate not to grind the barley to make flour for the bread for the Imam . They said it was based on his personal orders. Then I returned to the Imam and asked him the reason. Imam Ali said that he had learned this from the Prophet .”[23](#) Imam Sadiq said: “Solomon’s bread was made of whole barley.”[24](#)

Ahmad ibn Harun went to see Imam Ridha . Imam Ridha ordered food to be served. They spread the

tablecloth and brought some food. There were no fresh green vegetables there. The Imam did not eat, and told his servant: “Do you know that I will not eat unless there are some green vegetables on the table? Go and bring some.” Then the servant went and brought some green vegetables, and the Imam started to eat.”<sup>25</sup>

## The Most Important Advice

The Almighty God said in the Qur’an:

يَا بَنِي آدَمَ خُذُوا زِينَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ

***“O Children of Adam! Wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: eat and drink: but waste not by excess, for God loveth not the wasters.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-A’raf 7:31]***

It has been proved that this is the most important advice for our health. Scientists have done extensive research and have concluded that the roots of many diseases lie in excess food not being absorbed and remaining in the body. This excess fat causes an excessive pressure on the heart. It also serves as a ready place for various infections and diseases. Therefore, the first step to achieve health is to burn off all excessive fat. The main cause of this fat accumulation in the body is overeating and wastefulness. Therefore, we should eat moderately to avoid this ugly condition.

## Haroon’s Christian Doctor

Sheikh Tabarsi wrote in Majma’ul Bayan that Haroon ul-Rashid had a Christian doctor in his court. He was a renowned doctor. Once he told one of his Muslim assistants: “I can see no traces of medical advice in your heavenly Book while the most useful knowledge is that of religion and the body.” The Muslim scholar replied: “God the Almighty has summarized all of medicine into one-half of a verse and has said:

وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ

***“Eat and drink: But waste not by excess, for God loveth not the wasters.” [The Holy Qur’an, al-A’raf 7:31]***

The Prophet has also given the following medical advice:

الْمَعِدَةُ بَيْتُ الْأَدْوَاءِ وَالْحَمِيَّةُ رَأْسُ كُلِّ دَوَاءٍ وَأَعْطِ كُلَّ بَدَنٍ مَا عَوَّدْتَهُ

*“The stomach is the home for all illnesses. Abstinence is the best drug, and give your body what you have made it accustomed to.”*

The Christian doctor said: “Your Book and your Prophet have left nothing for [Jalinus26](#) in medicine.”[27](#)

## Avoid Getting Full

The Noble Prophet said:

الْأَكْلُ عَلَى الشَّيْعِ يُورِثُ الْبَرَصَ.

*“Eating beyond satiation will cause leprosy.”[28](#)*

He also said:

لَا تُمِيتُوا الْقُلُوبَ بِكَثْرَةِ الطَّعَامِ وَالشَّرَابِ، فَإِنَّ الْقُلُوبَ تَمُوتُ كَالزُّرُوعِ إِذَا كَثُرَ عَلَيْهَا الْمَاءُ.

*“Do not cause your hearts to die by overeating or over-drinking. Hearts die just as crops do when they are over-watered.”[29](#)*

## Avoid Forbidden Meals

The Prophet said:

مَنْ أَكَلَ لُقْمَةً حَرَامٍ لَمْ تُقْبَلْ لَهُ صَلَاةٌ أَرْبَعِينَ لَيْلَةً وَلَمْ تُسْتَجَبْ لَهُ دَعْوَةٌ أَرْبَعِينَ صَبَاحًا، فَكُلُّ لَحْمٍ يُنْبِتُهُ الْحَرَامُ فَالنَّارُ أَوْلَى بِهِ

*“The prayers of one who eats a morsel of what is forbidden will not be accepted for forty nights and his calls and supplications will not be answered for forty days. Flesh grown from forbidden food deserves to be burnt in the Fire.”[30](#)*

The Prophet said:

إِذَا وَقَعَتِ اللَّقْمَةُ مِنْ حَرَامٍ فِي جَوْفِ الْعَبْدِ لَعَنَهُ كُلُّ مَلَكٍ فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ، وَمَا دَامَتِ اللَّقْمَةُ فِي جَوْفِهِ لَا يَنْظُرُ إِلَيْهِ إِلَهٌ، وَمَنْ أَكَلَ لُقْمَةً مِنَ الْحَرَامِ فَقَدْ بَاءَ بِغَضَبٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ تَابَ تَابَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَإِنْ مَاتَ فَالنَّارُ أَوْلَى بِهِ

*“When a morsel of what is forbidden enters the stomach of a person, every angel in the heavens and on the earth curses him. As long as the morsel is in his body, God will not look upon him. Whoever eats a morsel of what is forbidden has earned God’s wrath. If he repents, God will turn to him in forgiveness,*

and if he dies (without repentance) then he is more deserving of the Fire.”<sup>31</sup>

Regarding the legitimate meals, the Prophet said:

مَنْ أَكَلَ الْحَلَالَ أَرْبَعِينَ يَوْماً نَوَّرَ اللَّهُ قَلْبَهُ وَأَجْرَى الْحِكْمَةَ مِنْ قَلْبِهِ عَلَى لِسَانِهِ.

“God will illuminate the heart of one who eats what is lawful for forty days, and will make wisdom flow from his heart to his tongue.”<sup>32</sup>

## The Secret to Good Health

The Prophet said:

مَنْ أَكَلَ الطَّعَامَ عَلَى النِّقَاءِ وَأَجَادَ الطَّعَامَ تَمَضُّغاً وَتَرَكَ الطَّعَامَ وَهُوَ يَشْتَهِيهِ وَلَمْ يَحْبِسِ الْغَائِطَ إِذَا أَتَى لَمْ يَمْرُضْ إِلَّا مَرَضَ الْمَوْتِ.

“Whoever adheres to hygienic principles regarding eating, and chews his food well, stops eating while he is still not full and does not put off going to the toilet when needed, will not suffer from any illnesses until death.”<sup>33</sup>

Imam Sajjad has instructed us to avoid excesses in eating, and practice moderation. We discussed the harms of overeating before. Now let us discuss the harms of undereating and hunger. Hunger is one of the most dangerous human conditions. A hungry person acts as if he forgets his faith and religious beliefs. He turns into a beast in an attempt to get some food to alleviate his hunger.

There was a major revolution in Basra in the 9th century. During his several years of rule, Sahib Zany committed many mass executions. He killed thousands of men, women and children. Those who survived hid in the daytime and left their hiding places at night in search of some food to eat. There was no more work to be done. No one worked on the land, and no one raised animals.

Therefore, deprivation and hunger prevailed. The people ate the cats and the dogs for some time. Then they started to eat the corpses of the dead. Even sometimes, they killed the weak people and ate them. It has been recorded in history that a woman was seen crying while she had a chopped-off head in her hands.

When asked about the reason she cried and said: “The hungry people surrounded my weak sister, and were waiting for her to die so that they could eat her. They attacked her, killed her, tore her into pieces, and ate her. They oppressed me because they did not give me a share of her meat. They gave me her head, but it is hard to eat!”<sup>34</sup> Notice how she had lost her feelings and senses, and cried over the hard to eat share of hers from her sister’s torn apart body!

## The Jurisprudents' Rule on the Stomach

If anyone hits someone else in the stomach and causes him an injury to the extent that he loses control over his urination and bowel movement, then he must pay one-third of the full compensation or blood money according to the jurisprudents' rule.<sup>35</sup> This is based on the following tradition. Sokuni quoted on the authority of Imam Sadiq : "A man had beaten another one in the stomach so hard that he messed up his pants. Then they asked Imam Ali on how to punish him. Imam Ali said: "He should either deliver an equal blow to his stomach or receive one-third full compensation in return."

<sup>1.</sup> By over-eating and over-drinking.

<sup>2.</sup> Tafsir al-Burhan, v.4, p.429.

<sup>3.</sup> Tafsir Namuneh, v.26, p. 146.

<sup>4.</sup> Majma' al-Bayan, v.9, p.223; Ruh al-Bayan, v.9, p.332.

<sup>5.</sup> Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, v.3, p.71.

<sup>6.</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7.</sup> Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, v.3, p.71.

<sup>8.</sup> In the following footnotes we present the effects of alcohol on the most researched organs or organ systems.

<sup>9.</sup> The brain is the seat of human thought and consciousness. Therefore any impairment of the brain's function can lead to drastic changes in a person's personality and behavior. Even though the brain makes up only two percent of the body's weight, it takes up about 20 percent of the body's blood. Since blood is the main medium through which alcohol is spread in the body, the brain is flooded with alcohol whenever you drink. Alcohol can affect the brain's function and the function of the nervous system in general by several methods including: direct toxic effects, withdrawal, nutritional deficiency, liver disease and head trauma among others.

One of the direct toxic effects of alcohol is its ability to change the production of neurotransmitters. Alcohol has a detrimental effect on many neurological processes such as temperature regulation, sleep cycle and coordination. Also, chronic alcoholics may suffer from a condition known as Korsakoff's syndrome. Korsakoff's syndrome (KS) is a neurological disorder in which one's short term memory is nearly non-existent. Those that are afflicted with KS are unable to remember events that occur after the onset of the symptoms.

Perhaps the most obvious effect of alcohol is the actual physiological damage it does to the brain of an alcoholic. Some of the factors that determine how and to what degree one's brain is damaged by alcohol include age, gender and family history but are not limited to just these. In order for the nervous system to function properly signals must be relayed to and from the brain. Neurotransmitters are essential for nerve-to-nerve communication. They travel between the junctions, known as a synapse, between two nerve cells. Neurotransmitters stimulate receptors on the surface of nerve cells, which in turn carry the signal down the nerve and on to other nerves.

The production of receptors is very sensitive and can fluctuate in response to chemical and environmental factors. Factors that increase the sensitivity of receptors tend to down-regulate, or decrease the production of receptors while factors that inhibit a receptor tend to up-regulate or increase the production of receptors. Up and down-regulation allow the nervous system to maintain a balance of neurotransmitters and receptors. Glutamate, an amino acid, is the major excitatory neurotransmitter in the human brain. There is sufficient research to support the fact that even in small doses alcohol can affect the function of glutamate. This interference can affect memory among other things and may cause the loss of short-term memory during periods of over-drinking.

Alcohol has an inhibitory effect on glutamate, which causes the glutamate receptor to be up-regulated, especially in the hippocampus, an area of the brain responsible for memory and related to epileptic seizures. Alcoholics suffering from alcohol withdrawal often suffer from glutamate over-activity due to the up-regulation of the glutamate receptor. Glutamate

over-activity has been related to cell death as caused by strokes and seizures. Malnutrition in alcoholics results in a deficiency in thiamine and magnesium, which may also contribute to glutamate over-activity. Another neurotransmitter that is affected by alcohol is gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA).

It is the main inhibitory neurotransmitter of the central nervous system. Alcohol acts as an inhibitory agent for GABA much like it does for glutamate. GABA receptors are up-regulated in alcoholics and when the inhibitory effect of alcohol is lost, GABA over-activity occurs. GABA over-excitation often results in withdrawal seizures – delirium tremens (DT) also known as rum fits. Alcohol also disrupts the function of various other neurotransmitters including serotonin, endorphins and acetylcholine. Serotonin affects moods, appetite and sleep. Stimulation of serotonin in conjunction with the release of endorphins cause the feeling of pleasure that many people get when intoxicated.

Acetylcholine is the key neurotransmitter in controlling cardiovascular mechanisms, including the dilation of blood vessels. It has also been suggested that alcohol may affect the level of catecholamines, a neurotransmitter that has been observed to be suppressed in patients with Korsakoff's syndrome. The toxic effects of alcohol may cause the nervous system to lose control of many of its functions.

[10.](#) A study published in the February issue of *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, utilized sophisticated brain scans called functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). The research was headed by Susan F. Tapert, Ph.D., UCSD assistant adjunct professor of psychiatry and a clinical psychologist at the Veterans Affairs Health Care System. She notes that “our findings suggest that even young and physically healthy individuals risk damaging their brains through chronic, heavy use of alcohol.”

[11.](#) Another effect of long-term alcohol consumption is the loss of muscular coordination. Alcohol damages a part of the brain known as the cerebellum. The cerebellum controls coordinated actions such as walking or swinging a bat. Damage to the cerebellum results in loss of coordination and can appear as imbalance and staggering.

[12.](#) Drinking alcohol has subtle effects on personality and emotions. It also impairs cognitive abilities such as perception, learning and memory. One of the most severe side effects of chronic alcohol consumption is Korsakoff's syndrome (KS). Patients suffering from KS have virtually no short-term memory. This condition is also known as anterograde amnesia. Alcoholics who develop KS can remember nothing past the day that the syndrome first set in.

Though KS does not affect long-term memories, in effect leaving a person's IQ intact, KS sufferers often are no longer able to function as normal members of society due to their complete lack of short-term memory. Perhaps the most obvious effect of alcohol on the nervous system is the physiological damage that it does to the brain. The areas of the brain that are most affected include the limbic system, diencephalon, cerebral cortex and cerebellum.

[13.](#) Chronic insomnia is complex and often results from a combination of factors, including underlying physical or mental disorders. One of the most common causes of chronic insomnia is depression. Other underlying causes include arthritis, kidney disease, heart failure, asthma, sleep apnea, narcolepsy, restless legs syndrome, Parkinson's disease and hyperthyroidism. However chronic insomnia may also be due to behavioral factors including the misuse of caffeine, alcohol or other substances; disrupted sleep/wake cycles as may occur with shift work or other nighttime activity schedules, and chronic stress.

[14.](#) The liver is where all alcohol must eventually go to be processed and neutralized. It follows that the liver is damaged from heavy, chronic alcohol consumption.

[15.](#) Scientists have long understood that alcohol abuse can lead to chronic diseases like cirrhosis of the liver. But in recent years, researchers have discovered that alcohol – in some cases only a few drinks a day – can make the liver and pancreas more susceptible to injury.

[16.](#) The heart can pump over 300 litres of blood in an hour. Since the blood is the primary medium for transporting ingested nutrients, in this case alcohol, it delivers alcohol straight to the heart and other parts of the cardiovascular system. In recent studies, it has been shown that heavy drinking causes serious damage to various parts of the cardiovascular system. For example, it causes the heart muscles to develop a disease known as cardiomyopathy. Also, heavy drinking increases the risk of unsteady heartbeat, high blood pressure and hemorrhagic stroke.

- [17.](#) Published statistics indicate that there are over 18 million alcoholics living in America.
- [18.](#) "Balahaye Ijtima'i", quoted from Tandorost Magazine.
- [19.](#) Ibid.
- [20.](#) Safinah al-Bihar, v. 1, p.427.
- [21.](#) Gunahane Kabire, v. 1, p.253
- [22.](#) Safinah al-Bihar, v.2, p.84.
- [23.](#) Koodak (Guftar-i-Falsafi), v. 1, p.249.
- [24.](#) Mustadrak al-Wasa'il, v.3, p. 103.
- [25.](#) Koodak, v. 1, p.251.
- [26.](#) Same as Galen 131-210 A.D. There were many who contributed to the present day medicine as we know it – from Hippocrates (Bukrat) , Plato, Aristotle and Galen to our present day researchers. Hippocrates (460-370 B.C) is the symbol of the first creative period of Greek medicine and is aptly known as the 'Father of medicine'. Plato and Aristotle (384-322 B.C) also contributed to the basis of Greek medicine in its original state; while Galen nurtured it to quite a degree.
- [27.](#) Fehrist-i-Ghurur al-Hikam, p. 13.
- [28.](#) Fehrist-i-Ghurur al-Hikam, p.25; Makarim al-Akhlaq, p. 147.
- [29.](#) Makarim al-Akhlaq, p. 150.
- [30.](#) Safinah al-Bihar, v. 1, p.24.
- [31.](#) Makarim al-Akhlaq, p. 150.
- [32.](#) Mahajjah al-Bayda, v.3, p.204.
- [33.](#) Makarim al-Akhlaq, p. 146.
- [34.](#) Tatamat al-Muntaha, p.380.
- [35.](#) Mabani' Taklimat al-Minhaj, v.2, p.371.

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