

Autonomic Instability

Unstable Atomic-automobile

Autonomic instability is common and is characterized by tremor, tachycardia, hypertension, anxiety, and insomnia.

Seizures

Caesar

Seizures, typically generalized tonic-clonic, can be a manifestation of delirium tremens; these seizures usually happen 2-4 days after the last drink.

Insomnia

Taped-awake-insomniac

Insomnia can be a manifestation of delirium tremens.

Nausea/Vomiting

Vomiting

Nausea and vomiting can be a manifestations of delirium tremens.

Treatment

Benzodiazepines

Benz-dice

Benzodiazepines (lorazepam, diazepam, chlordiazepoxide) are used for the treatment of delirium tremens. These work by increasing inhibitory GABA activity in the CNS. For patients with concomitant liver disease (e.g. alcoholic liver disease), short-acting lorazepam or oxazepam are recommended.

Supportive Care

Supportive IV bags

Management of delirium tremens is directed at alleviating symptoms, correcting metabolic derangements, and preventing complications. If there are no contraindications (e.g., volume overload), isotonic IV fluids can be infused until patients are clinically euvolemic. Thiamine (B1) and glucose should be administered in order to prevent the development of Wernicke encephalopathy as these patients frequently have a history of excessive alcohol use. Multivitamins containing folate (B9) should be given, and deficiencies of potassium, magnesium, and phosphate should be corrected.