

KORSAKOFF'S SYNDROME

FACTS

- A chronic memory disorder caused by lack of thiamine, also called Vitamin B1
- May occur after Wernicke's encephalopathy – a severe lack of thiamine which generally requires hospitalization
- Slow and usually incomplete improvement in memory function

SYMPTOMS

- Mental confusion, amnesia, confusion, and disorientation
- Vision impairment
- Difficulty learning new information, establishing new memories, and recalling previous memories
- Confabulation – making up things that can't be remembered
- May have an entire coherent conversation then completely forget that it happened

RISK FACTORS

- Alcohol abuse
- Deficiencies related to poor diet
- Prolonged vomiting
- Chronic infection
- Kidney dialysis
- Recent surgery for obesity
- Widespread cancer in the body
- AIDS

DIAGNOSIS

- Assessment through review of medical history and medications, observations during the appointment, and interviews with family or close friends
- Physical and neurological exam, including memory test and depression screen
- Lab studies, including blood count and glucose, thyroid, Vitamin B12, Vitamin D, and thiamine levels
- A possible CT scan of the head or an MRI of the brain

TREATMENT

- Thiamine replacement
- Adequate nutrition and hydration