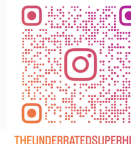


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THEUNDERRATEDSUPERHERO

Medical Conditions That Can Mimic Substance Use & Withdrawal

Mimics Symptoms of...	Medical Condition	Key Clues to Differentiate
Diabetes (Hypoglycemia or Ketoacidosis)	Alcohol or opioid intoxication (slurred speech, confusion, altered consciousness)	Check blood sugar levels, fruity breath odor (ketoacidosis)
Epilepsy & Post-Seizure States	Stimulant intoxication (agitation, confusion) OR withdrawal (disorientation, tremors)	History of seizures? Postictal state often follows a seizure
Liver Failure (Hepatic Encephalopathy)	Opioid or alcohol intoxication (slowed responses, confusion, slurred speech)	Jaundice, history of liver disease, abnormal ammonia levels
Infections (Sepsis, Meningitis, Brain Abscess)	Opioid withdrawal or stimulant-induced psychosis	Fever, neck stiffness, altered mental status
Neurological Disorders (Stroke, Parkinson's, Multiple Sclerosis, Brain Tumors)	Alcohol withdrawal (tremors, confusion) OR stimulant use (muscle rigidity, involuntary movements)	Sudden onset, weakness on one side, speech difficulty
Carbon Monoxide Poisoning	Alcohol intoxication (dizziness, confusion, headache, nausea)	Multiple people in the same environment affected? Consider CO poisoning.
Thyroid Disorders (Hyperthyroidism, Hypothyroidism)	Stimulant use (racing heart, agitation) OR depression (fatigue, slowed thinking)	Check TSH levels, look for long-term symptoms

Why This Matters?

Some medical conditions cause symptoms that resemble intoxication, withdrawal, or psychiatric illness, leading to misdiagnosis. When in doubt, rule out medical causes first.

Red Flag Symptoms Suggesting Medical Evaluation is Needed:

- ♦ Sudden onset of confusion, agitation, or unresponsiveness
- ♦ Involuntary muscle movements (tremors, seizures)
- ♦ Profound sweating or drastic changes in body temperature
- ♦ Recurrent vomiting, dizziness, or loss of consciousness
- ♦ Pupil irregularities that don't match substance history

- When in doubt, prioritize medical screening—especially if symptoms appear suddenly, are unexplained, or don't fit typical substance use patterns.
- Common tests to rule out medical causes: Blood glucose, ammonia levels, liver function tests, thyroid panel, CT scan (if neurological symptoms present).
- Emergency referral is needed for: Suspected stroke, severe infections, seizures, diabetic crisis, or loss of consciousness.