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Alcohol

National Cancer Institute

Source

National Cancer Institute. *Alcohol*. NCI Thesaurus. Code C2190.

A volatile liquid prepared by fermentation of certain carbohydrates. Alcohol acts as a central nervous system (CNS) depressant, a diuretic, and a disinfectant. Although the exact mechanism of CNS depression is unknown, alcohol may act by inhibiting the opening of calcium channels, mediated by the binding of the inhibitory neurotransmitter gamma-amino butyric acid (GABA) to GABA-A receptors, or through inhibitory actions at N-methyl-D-aspartate (NMDA)-type glutamate receptors. Alcohol inhibits the production of antidiuretic hormone, thereby producing diuresis that may lead to dehydration. This agent kills organisms by denaturing their proteins.