

Health is not a condition of matter, but of mind

Written by Justin Newman, medical student

Holiday Booze and Hangovers

“It provokes the desire but it take away the performance.” — Shakespeare, Macbeth

The holiday season is in full swing. With this time of year comes parties and occasionally, the over-indulgence of alcohol. While it is obvious you should not drink too much, and for heaven’s sake never drive after drinking, it may happen you are “over served” on occasion.

It is all too well known that after drinking comes the dreaded next morning. When the night out leads to difficulty getting out of bed, you may wonder: what can I do to feel better? Why did I do that? And, perhaps—why does my body feel this way?

Alcohol wreaks havoc on many parts of your body. When you imbibe the body becomes dehydrated. A hormone that helps to control the kidneys is affected, and the kidneys allow an increased amount of water to pass out as urine.

The body cannot correctly control the water it is losing. This leads to frequent trips to the bathroom, the dry mouth in the morning and the need to rehydrate the following day.

Alcohol also gets to your brain. This causes relaxation and the good feeling that appropriate drinking leads to. However, too much alcohol can also lead to a loss of inhibition, causing inappropriate behavior. The effects on the brain will also cause problems with reactions and coordination.

A slowed reaction time will cause many problems, including making you unsafe for driving or operating equipment. The brain that is unable to process movement correctly will cause problems with coordination that you are unable to hide.

This is the reason for the roadside test that police will do to see if you have been drinking. They are able to identify from the way you move during certain tests, and from the way your eyes move, there is alcohol affecting the circuitry in your head. Be smart and don’t drink too much!

One of the worst parts of the hung-over day is feeling very tired, no matter how much you slept the night before. This is because of another effect of alcohol on your brain. Alcohol affects your ability to sleep.

When there is alcohol in the system, the brain cannot properly enter the deep sleep which results in a restful night’s sleep. So, the sleep that you get is not nearly as effective as a normal night’s sleep.

I hate to break this to you, but there is really nothing proven to cure a hangover. Nothing but time will help you feel better. Despite what people may have told you, there is no real difference in what type of alcohol you were drinking, whether you started with beer or hard alcohol, or even what type of mixer was used. It all boils down to the amount of alcohol that you consume.

There have been studies looking at prickly pear extract, chemicals in tomatoes, all manner of proteins and pills—but nothing effectively works. Taking a Tylenol at night won’t help you, since the effects wear off long before morning. In fact, too much Tylenol or other pain killers may hurt your body more than you are aware.

Be sure to drink plenty of water, both during the night, before you go to bed and when you get up. But most importantly, be smart! Do not put yourself or others into danger and remember, everything in moderation.

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