

Easy Does It ■

So what's the answer—don't drink? That's sensible enough advice, but it's probably not for everyone.

Still, there *are* precautions that will help check the odds of a hangover. One involves slowing down the absorption of alcohol in the body by eating before you drink (and even while you're drinking) and by sipping your drinks slowly.

The safest bet of all is to practice moderation when drinking.

"We've found that if you want to avoid the whole hangover problem, use moderation," the DISCUS spokesman noted. "Moderation is healthy and painless. Drink enjoyably, but as *part* of a social event, not the goal."

Think about it. Because of all the medications, preparations and potions touted as remedies for hangovers through the ages, the only sure-fire way to spell relief the morning after the night before is (and always has been): M-O-D-E-R-A-T-I-O-N.

Cheers! ■



This is one in a series of publications on drugs, behavior, and health published by Do It Now Foundation. Please call or write for a list of current titles, or visit our web site at www.doitnow.org.



Do It Now Foundation

Box 27568 ■ Tempe, AZ 85285-7568 ■ 480.736.0599

HANGOVERS



▶ An Ounce of Prevention

a do it now foundation publication by christina dye

Post-Party Blues ■

It's going to be one of **those** days.

You knew it the instant you woke up, your head pounding out paradiddles and your mouth as dry as an armadillo with heatstroke.

You've been here before—swore, in fact, that you'd never be here again.

But, somehow, you're back again anyway, riding out the twists and turns and torments of a hangover.

And it's all uphill from here.

No matter what else they may be, hangovers are more than just an unpleasant interlude for weekend party animals.

For one thing, morning-after miseries are a leading cause of workplace absenteeism and low productivity.

And heading back to the bottle for next-day relief (an ancient practice sometimes known as taking a "hair of the dog that bit you") only reinforces the tendency to drink more, more often.

So hangovers are more than just a headache, and a lot more than a cute cultural cliché.

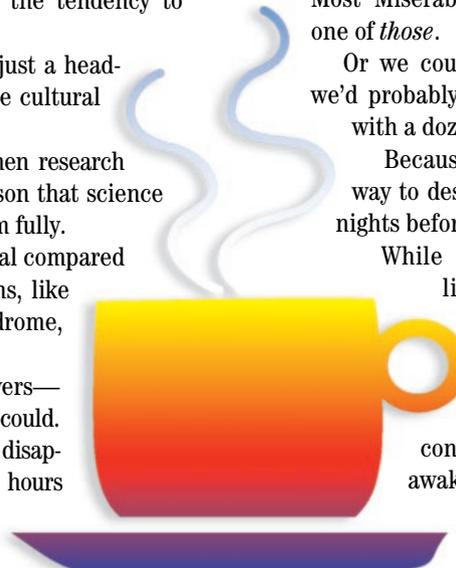
Still, they're often ignored when research dollars are passed out—one reason that science has been slow to investigate them fully.

Of course, hangovers *are* trivial compared to other alcohol-related problems, like drunk driving, fetal alcohol syndrome, and alcoholism.

People don't die from hangovers—though they might wish that they could. And morning-after symptoms *do* disappear without treatment in a few hours or days.

Still, that doesn't make them any easier to take when they're happening to you.

And that's the whole point of this pamphlet.



7 a.m. Solution? Handling hangovers means more than jump-starting the day with a Starbucks grande and a shout-out (and traffic update) from the morning Zoo Crew.

Hangovers are more than just unnecessarily long and unpleasant. They're unnecessary altogether.



In it, we'll talk about what hangovers are and where they come from. We'll discuss the basics of barroom pharmacology with the goal of helping you head off hangovers from here on out.

Because hangovers are more than just unnecessarily long and unnecessarily unpleasant. They're unnecessary altogether.

Signs & Symptoms ■

Where do we start in finding out about hangovers? We could begin with personal tales of My Most Miserable Morning After. Everybody's got one of *those*.

Or we could ask the experts. But if we did, we'd probably find a dozen different authorities with a dozen different answers.

Because the fact is that there's no single way to describe all the mornings after all the nights before.

While the most common complaints linked to hangovers center on thirst, body aches, and fatigue, over 30 different morning-after symptoms have been identified.

Following an evening of close consultation with the bottle, some awaken feeling dizzy or nauseous. Others are hit by headaches, dehydration, or heartburn. Some don't suffer much at all, while others pay for Saturday with a bleary fatigue that lingers from Sunday to Monday and beyond.

So much of what's drifted down through the years under the classification of "hangover" is probably better described as the "Morning After Syndrome," varying in severity and duration from one sufferer—and one Sunday—to the next.

What accounts for the variation?

Everything from attitude to atmosphere figures into the equation, but particularly important is the question of how fast your body *metabolizes*, or breaks down, alcohol.

Intake/Output ■

Biologically, hangovers are linked to high levels of alcohol in the bloodstream.

About 95 percent of the alcohol content of a drink is broken down in the liver. What's left is excreted in the sweat, breath and urine.

But when intake outpaces output, blood alcohol level remains higher longer, and the likelihood of a hangover increases.

The maximum level at which the liver can metabolize alcohol is just under an ounce of liquor per hour—or the alcohol equivalent in a 12-ounce beer or a five-ounce glass of wine.

But age, sex and weight alter that rate, increasing the intensity of the alcohol high and the chances for a hangover low.

The intoxication threshold drops with increasing years and at lower body weights, while men, in general, tend to fare better than women.

Though the fate of alcohol in the body and bloodstream may differ slightly from drinker to drinker, the onset of hangovers is relatively fixed.

Morning-after aches and pains begin to make themselves felt as blood alcohol levels start to fall,

generally an hour or so following the last drink of the night.

The worst symptoms strike 8-10 hours later, with the full recovery cycle spreading out hours beyond.

This prolonged rebound is believed to stem from the body's slow adjustment to the absence of alcohol.

In fact, some researchers think that hangovers represent a mild form of alcohol withdrawal.

Others argue that the hangover is only a response to the toxic effects of *ethanol*, liquor's psychoactive ingredient. Others blame *congeners*, the chemical by-products of alcohol's fermentation, distillation, and aging.

But while experts still debate the biochemical basis of the hangover, most sufferers instinctively know what to blame: booze—too much too soon.

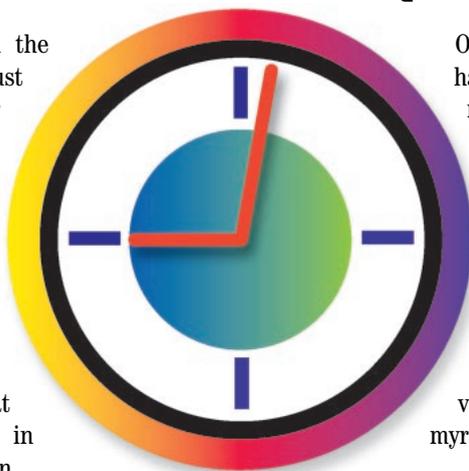
Too bad they don't remember till it's too late.

Quick-Fixes & Quackery ■

Over the centuries, the hangover has inspired any number of home remedies—from showers and saunas to coffee and cabbage—intended to ease the symptoms that go along with going too far.

Early Romans choked down raw owl's eggs and sheep lungs as an answer to the morning after. Assyrians favored ground swallow beaks and myrrh, while centuries later and half a world away, voodoo priests plunged needles in the corks of offending containers.

In America today, a range of organic extracts—from primrose oil to herbal teas—have been suggested, as have other disciplines and techniques, from acupuncture to bio-feedback.



Healing Time. In battling a hangover, a victim's best ally is the passage of time.

“All so-called hangover cures have one thing in common: They **don't** work. The only real cure for a hangover is sobriety.”



Among the newer concoctions to hit the hangover-helper market are preparations which claim to sober up drinkers by reversing the intoxicating effects of alcohol.

But according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the mixtures—generally blends of salts, sugars and vitamins—don't work, at least not at turning around the effects of alcohol.

Probably the most familiar item in the unofficial pharmacy of folk remedies for hangovers is a drink or two more of the tonic of the night before.

That's often more than some people can stomach, hangover or not, but the practice *does* produce results by smoothing out—at least temporarily—a hangover's sharper twists and turns.

On the other hand, morning drinking also produces results of an entirely different order and often is considered an early sign of impending alcoholism.

According to most experts with a serious interest in the topic, most morning-after medications and emergency measures are no more than placebos, banking heavily on the power of belief and a hefty dose of wishful thinking.

“There are no true hangover remedies available,” a spokesman for the Distilled Spirits Council of the United States says.

“All so-called hangover cures have one thing in common: They don't work. The only real cure for a hangover is sobriety.”

Mastering Moderation: How To Drink Responsibly

If you're a drinker and want to avoid hangovers, learn to drink responsibly. That means not drinking to escape—problems or people—and not drinking to get drunk. But that's only what it *doesn't* mean.

What it *does* mean is learning to see alcohol for what it is—a drug—and remembering to approach it with the healthy dose of caution it deserves.

Here are four ways to reduce your risk of problems:

- ▶ **Eat before drinking.** Food slows the rate at which alcohol is absorbed, lowering peak blood alcohol levels. That means that if you want to avoid waking up in your own private hell, eat before drinking—and snack on foods while drinking.
- ▶ **Drink slowly.** Sip drinks rather than gulping them. Drinking too much often results from drinking too fast. And don't chug or “shotgun” your drinks. If you do, you might not have to worry about waking up with a hangover. You might not wake up at all.
- ▶ **Space your drinks.** When you're drinking, switch off to soda or fruit juice from time to time.
- ▶ **Set a drinking limit.** Know—and respect—your personal drinking limit. Notice how different amounts affect you. Then set a realistic limit on your own drinking—and stick to it. ■

