

# How to Cure a Hangover

It happens. You overdid it the night before and now you feel like you've been kicked repeatedly in the back of the head by a donkey. Welcome to the wonderful world of hangovers.

First, let's talk about why you've got this plague from hell. One of the main culprits is dehydration, which can happen with even a couple of cocktails if you aren't careful. Here's some tips on how to avoid a hangover in the first place.

**Pace Yourself.** Everyone's liver, regardless of their weight or size, can process no more than one drink per hour. If you stick to that, you can last out a long evening without getting hammered.

**Drink plenty of water** while you are knocking back the shots. People don't think about drinking when they are drinking, because they are drinking. But alcohol doesn't replenish fluids: Instead, it increases your rate of urination and dehydrates the crap out of you.

**Don't drink on an empty stomach.** Some people's blood sugar level can plummet when they drink, resulting in shakiness, confusion, or even seizures, and the less food there is in your stomach, the faster alcohol is absorbed. Food slows the processing of alcohol. Swallowing 1-2 teaspoons of raw olive oil before you begin imbibing serves the same purpose.

**Women are cheap drunks.** Although I have known women who could drink any man under the table, the medical fact is that women have less dehydrogenase, the enzyme that breaks down alcohol in the stomach. They can get intoxicated much faster than men. Women also have a higher percentage of body fat and a lower percentage of water, so alcohol concentrates faster in their systems.

**Don't mix medications with alcohol.** Certain medications should never be mixed with alcohol. Acetaminophen is the leading cause of liver failure in the US today: When combined with alcohol, the effect on your liver can be deadly. Antidepressants are another dangerous mix. Ask your doctor before combining any pill with booze. If you get the okay, ask how much. Doctors define social use as one to two drinks in an evening, but most college students define social use as drinking all night with a group of buddies.

**Take prickly pear extract several hours before you drink.** This tip, straight from WebMD, can cut hangover symptoms by about half. The extract seems to curb the inflammation that exacerbates overall malaise.

So, let's say you managed to get hungover anyway. What can you do to survive the rest of the day without your freakin' head exploding?

**Hair of the Dog.** This is a sure-fire remedy, but it's a temporary and also rather toxic one. Here's why it works: When you drink, alcohol blocks the release of the brain chemical glutamate, paradoxically causing your brain to make even more of it.

When the booze wears off, your brain unloads a glut of glutamate, triggering symptoms like headache and nausea. Having another drink makes your brain withhold the glutamate again, but this only delays your hangover. Of course, you could just keep on drinking as long as you don't mind putting your life on

hold for the interim.

**Pedialyte.** A better alternative to water, you'll find this drink in the baby aisle. Originally developed for dehydrated sick infants, it is super charged with electrolytes, which you lose while drinking at about the same rate as brain cells. Gatorade and other sports drinks probably work as well, but guzzling Pedialyte is a lot funnier.

**Sleep it off.** If you can remain unconscious long enough, you might luck out and wake up after most of your symptoms have eased off. But watch out: If you sleep too long and drink no water, you can become dangerously dehydrated.

**Food.** There's nothing better for a hangover. Some people swear by ramen soup, some by enchiladas, but the weirdest tip I got was from a doctor. His recommendation? The Garbage Plate, voted by health.com as the fattiest food in the state of New York. This greasy spoon delight is a combination of cheeseburger, hamburger, red hots, white hots, Italian sausage, fried chicken, fish, ham, grilled cheese, eggs, and sides of home fries, baked beans, and macaroni salad. Not quite sure why it works, but I suspect that everyone feels better after they puke.