

## The anatomy of a hangover

admin · Sunday, March 9th, 2008

It's no secret that intoxication has a number of immediate negative consequences. Among other things, it impairs judgement, it impairs the ability to do most things and it can bring on a depressed mood. But even after a drinker has sobered up, alcohol can still be causing the body trouble. More than 75 percent of alcohol consumers have experienced a hangover at least once; 15 percent have one at least every month; and 25 percent of college students feel symptoms weekly.

The formal name for a hangover is **veisalgia**, from the Norwegian word for "uneasiness following debauchery" (*kveis*) and the Greek word for "pain" (*algia*) -- an appropriate title considering the uncomfortable symptoms experienced by the average drinker. The common hangover includes some or all of the following:

- Headache
- Poor sense of overall well-being
- Sensitivity to light and sound
- Diarrhea
- Loss of appetite
- Trembling
- Nausea
- Fatigue
- Increased heart rate and blood pressure
- Dehydration(dry mouth, extreme thirst, dry eyes)
- Trouble concentrating
- Anxiety
- Difficulty sleeping
- Weakness

The most common symptoms are headache, fatigue and dehydration, and the least common is trembling. The severity and number of symptoms varies from person to person; however, it is generally true that the more alcohol a drinker consumes, the worse the hangover will be.

It usually takes five to seven cocktails over the course of four to six hours to cause a hangover for a light-to-moderate drinker (a man who drinks up to three alcoholic beverages a day or a woman who drinks up to one). It may take more alcohol for heavier drinkers because of increased **tolerance**. Other than the number of drinks consumed, hangovers can be made worse by:

- drinking on an empty stomach
- lack of sleep
- increased physical activity while drinking (dancing, for example)
- dehydration before drinking
- poor health

The reason for some symptoms isn't fully understood, but research has led scientists to have a pretty good understanding of the primary causes of a hangover. In the next few days, we'll find out what's going on in the body to cause these problems.

This entry was posted on Sunday, March 9th, 2008 at 9:26 am and is filed under [Alcoholism Articles, Information And Help](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [Comments \(RSS\)](#) feed. You can leave a response, or [trackback](#) from your own site.