



Tips to Ease Holiday Overindulgence from the National Headache Foundation

Chicago, IL - The onset of the holiday season brings the usual invitations to parties and open houses. They offer a chance to visit with valued friends and business associates and share in the holiday spirit. However, they also provide the opportunity to eat and drink more than usual.

Quite possibly, one of the most dreaded aspects of the holiday season is the hangover headache, caused simply by excessive alcohol consumption. The discomfort of hangover headache is experienced the morning after because alcohol causes the blood vessels to swell or dilate which, in turn, triggers headache pain and may cause slight sweating. The alcohol also acts as a diuretic, which leads to dehydration.

To help avoid or lessen the suffering associated with hangover headache that often accompanies these annual festivities, the National Headache Foundation offers some common sense advice and a headache-free drink recipe.

If you choose to drink alcohol, do so in moderation. Try to sip your drink slowly. Mixed drinks containing fruit or vegetable juices will probably have less effect than straight alcohol. Avoid red wine, which contains naturally occurring chemicals called congeners. Congeners impart the specific characteristic tastes to different types of wine and other alcoholic beverages. Unfortunately, they also may play a role in causing headaches. Congeners are more common in red than white wine. Also, it is advisable to reduce the actual number of alcoholic beverages you consume. Spend time catching up with an old friend at the snack table with a soda or glass of water.

Eat some honey. Honey supplies fructose, a sugar that helps the body metabolize the alcohol ingested, is rich in vitamin B6 and can reduce any hangover symptoms. Two tablespoons of honey on a cracker or piece of toast, before or after drinking, may prevent a hangover. Tomato juice, another good source of fructose, also allows the body to burn alcohol faster. The sugar in fruit and fruit juices may also reduce some symptoms of hangover, so consumption of these products can be beneficial.

Drink fluids containing minerals and salts. Liquids rich in minerals and salts offer relief from the dehydration caused by alcohol consumption. A cup of broth or bouillon, for example, will replace fluid and will not cause nausea. In general, replacement of fluids with beverages, such as sports drinks or water, is helpful.

Drink a cup of coffee. Caffeine may provide some relief in alleviating the headache symptoms and decreasing the duration of pain. The caffeine acts as a vasoconstrictor and eases the dilated blood vessels. Consider drinking a cup of coffee as soon as you wake up the next morning.

Take Ibuprofen. While aspirin is okay, Ibuprofen is typically less irritating to the stomach, and can also ease the pain of hangover headache.

Alternate non-alcoholic beverages with alcoholic beverages. Drinking one non-alcoholic beverage between each alcoholic beverage reduces overall alcohol consumption and helps replenish fluids. An easy way to achieve this is when ordering a drink at the bar; ask for a glass of water in addition to your alcoholic beverage of choice.

Eat greasy food before consuming alcohol. While it is wise to be health-conscious and avoid too much of these foods in general, this is a situation where eating fatty foods may be helpful. If consumed prior to drinking alcohol, these foods help line the intestines, which causes alcohol absorption to take longer. In other words, a burger or burrito before your beer or Bloody Mary might be beneficial.

The National Headache Foundation suggests the "Champagne Fooler," a headache-free recipe, for this festive time of year.

CHAMPAGNE FOOLER

1 1/3 cups apple juice
1 teaspoon lemon juice
12 ounces club soda

Chill four glasses. Mix together apple juice and lemon juice. Add club soda and stir gently to blend. Pour into glasses and serve immediately. Yields four servings.

While a headache caused by drinking too much may be more common at this time of year, chronic headaches can be a problem at any time. Headaches are a legitimate biological disease which are treatable. If you are experiencing headache pain on a routine basis, make a specific appointment with your healthcare provider to discuss your headache problem and seek accurate diagnosis and treatment.

The National Headache Foundation (NHF), founded in 1970, is a nonprofit organization dedicated to serving headache sufferers, their families and the healthcare providers who treat them; promoting research into headache causes and treatments; and educating the public to the fact that headaches are a legitimate biological disease and sufferers should receive understanding and continuity of care.

For more information on headache causes and treatments, visit www.headaches.org or call 1-888-NHF-5552 (M-F. 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. CT).