

SPECIAL LOSE-YOUR-GUT ISSUE!

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THE EASY WAY TO **HARD ABS**
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Hangover Helpers

Drinking is a buy-now, pay-later proposition. Here's how to cut your interest rate

MODERATION MAY BE YOUR MANTRA, but we all cross the line now and then. That's why we tested 11 common hangover remedies. Use trial and error to figure out which work best for you. —LEIGH COLE

THE CURE	THE CLAIM	OUR TEST	THE VERDICT
▷ APPROACH ONE: STAY HYDRATED			
Water	Alcohol inhibits secretion of the hormone vasopressin, bringing on dehydration, which exacerbates the symptoms of a hangover.	Two approaches: Drink loads at the end of a night, or drink throughout the evening. "For me, a glass every 2 hours worked great," said our tester.	"It puts you ahead of the game," says Robert Swift, M.D., of Brown University, adding that, unlike Coors, it's not a silver bullet. Try something else, too.
Gatorade	Gatorade's 6 percent carbohydrate solution promotes rehydration better than mere water.	"I downed two huge bottles at the end of the night," said our tester. "And I felt like a million bucks the next day."	It's a great substitute for plain old water. "The extra salt helps your body absorb the fluid more quickly," explains Dr. Swift.
▷ APPROACH TWO: ABSORB SLOWER, METABOLIZE FASTER			
The Mega-Dinner	Food delays gastric emptying in the stomach—meaning alcohol stays there longer and is processed more slowly.	There's nothing like pounding a burger before a night of boozing. But the effect wore off as I kept drinking," said our tester.	A no-brainer: Don't drink on an empty stomach. "The longer alcohol stays in the stomach," says Dr. Swift, "the better your body breaks it down."
The Juice Chaser (two glasses of OJ or tomato juice before bed)	The fructose in the juice speeds up metabolism, ridding your system of alcohol more quickly.	"I felt as sick the next day as I would have otherwise," reported our still-queasy guinea pig. "It just didn't work."	Looks good on paper, but here's the fine print: "You'd have to drink at least 10 glasses," says Carlton K. Erickson, Ph.D., of the University of Texas.
RU-21 (a supplement)	It slows down the creation of a nasty by-product—the one that causes headaches and nausea—while speeding up the destruction of others.	"Success: I woke up to a group of clear-headed people. There was no groaning, no puking, and no handing out aspirin," said our tester.	Works, but only to a point: "Your metabolism is already running as fast as it can," says Dr. Swift. But if it's effective for you, go for it.
▷ APPROACH THREE: REPLACE ESSENTIAL NUTRIENTS			
Saltines (10, to be exact, washed down with 24 oz water)	Salt helps you retain the fluid you lose over a night of drinking. With 32 milligrams of salt per cracker, this is a surefire way to keep from drying up.	"Too labor-intensive. I would much rather pop a pill than shove crackers down my abused throat."	Drinking water is a better way to stay hydrated. But, "at the very least, it'll help dilute the alcohol in your stomach," says Dr. Swift.
The Bull's-Eye (12-oz glass of OJ mixed with a raw egg)	Fructose in the OJ helps promote breakdown of alcohol, and egg protein replaces lost nutrients.	"More vomit-inducing than the alcohol itself."	"There is no evident benefit to this concoction that would justify the risk of getting salmonella," says Dr. Swift.
▷ APPROACH FOUR: CLEAR YOUR HEAD			
Hair of the Dog	Hangovers only hit once you sober up, so stay drunk.	"I woke up feeling horrible. I was nauseous and grumpy. My head was pounding. Then I had three beers and felt like a new man," said our tester.	Fine, but you're just putting off the inevitable. Plus: "This could lead to alcohol abuse," says Erickson. Duh.
Drinking Only Light-Colored Alcohol (white wine, vodka, and gin)	Lighter drinks have fewer headache-inducing congeners than darker drinks, like red wine, beer, and dark liquors.	"I felt just as disgusting as on any other night of hard drinking. On the way home, I had to have my friend pull over so I could puke."	It actually does work—if you're drinking in moderation. "If you drink a quart of white wine, you're still going to get a hangover," says Erickson.
Aspirin	Popping two the night before fights off headaches before they start.	"My head wasn't too bad, but I was still tired and nauseated."	Thumbs-up—but be careful. "Aspirin can irritate the stomach," says Dr. Swift. And mixing alcohol and Tylenol can damage the liver.
Exercise	Sweating helps leach alcohol out of your system more quickly.	"I feel like I'm actually sweating out alcohol. It might just be in my head, but I feel better by doing it."	The perfect placebo: "You're just doing something to get your mind off the hangover," says Erickson. But you're getting a good workout, too.

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