

Christmas



a survival
guide

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The festive season is a time for fun, for parties, for nights out and family get togethers. For most people, celebrating with the use of alcohol is a traditional part of Christmas and helps people to relax and have a good time.

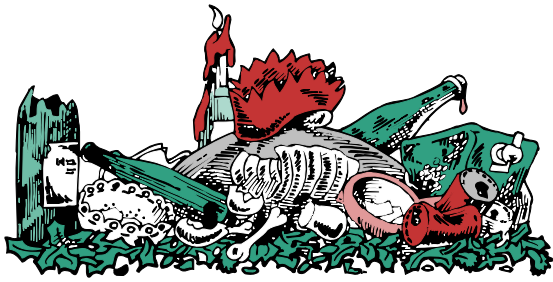
The dangers of over-indulgence are well known. A little of what you fancy does you good, but too much can lead to accidents, drink driving, anti-social behaviour and arguments – the exact opposite of the Christmas spirit. Seasoned party-goers aim to achieve a gradual happy glow during the evening, not to get out of their heads in the first half hour and spend the rest of the evening in the toilet.

So to ensure your party goes with a swing, here are 12 tips to help you maximise the highs without experiencing the lows.

- 1 Organise your transport home before the night out. Book taxis or nominate a sober driver at the planning stage.
- 2 Don't have a drink before you go out and make sure the first drink you have is non-alcoholic. People often drink too quickly when they are thirsty.
- 3 Know your mind and don't let anyone pressurise you into drinking more than you want. Avoid round-buying.

- 4 Know your alcohol. Read the label on the bottle before you try the drink. Average strength cider is 3.5% Alcohol by Volume for example, but some ciders are more than twice this strength.
- 5 At parties where alcohol is plentiful and free, a little self-discipline is called for. Try to pour yourself a normal measure of the drink (like a pub measure). Don't be tempted to fill a plastic tumbler with wine.
- 6 Pace your drinking. Keep an eye on the clock and note how many alcoholic drinks you have consumed during the hour. It makes sense to alternate alcoholic with soft drinks.
- 7 Beer drinkers in pubs could try a low alcohol Mickey Mouse. This is a half of ordinary bitter mixed with a bottle or draught alcohol-free lager. It looks good, takes just as long to drink but contains only half as much alcohol.
- 8 Rehearse ways of saying 'No'. Quick-fire humour or diversionary tactics are very effective against peer pressure. (eg 'Mine's a coke please I'm driving/on medication', 'No thanks, but let me get you one').





- 9 If you're hosting a party, make sure there are lots of soft drinks available and try to make these at least as attractive as their alcoholic counterparts.
- 10 Remember alcohol is a dis-inhibiting drug. The more you drink, the more difficult it becomes to say 'No'. If you recognise that this often happens to you, make it a rule to keep on the soft drinks until an hour or so before closing time or the end of the party. That way you'll remain in control.
- 11 Have a meal first if you're planning to have a few drinks. It won't stop you getting merry, but it will slow the absorption rate of alcohol into the bloodstream. This means you are less likely to suddenly feel drunk and less likely to feel sick or pass out if you overdo it.
- 12 If someone you are with gets very drunk, don't leave them on their own to sober up. Too much alcohol can be dangerous and people who are dead drunk need supervision. If at any stage they become unconscious (cannot be roused) you should call an ambulance.

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Second thoughts....forget the hair of the human. Make that an orange juice and two Aspirins.



hangover cures

Basically once you have got a hangover it's too late! However there are a few things you can do to lessen or relieve the effects.

- Alcohol dehydrates the body. Keep drinking soft drinks, fruit juices or water during the rest of the day.
- Alcohol destroys vitamin B in the body. This can cause short-term memory loss and poor concentration. Yeast extract sandwiches or vitamin B complex tablets are recommended.
- Headaches can be relieved by aspirin or paracetamol. Be careful not to take more than you absolutely need though, as they too can affect the stomach and liver.
- Some hangover symptoms are caused by the congeners in drinks. The darker the colour of the drink, the more congeners there are in it. Resolve in future to drink less in total and fewer 'dark' drinks in particular.
- Lie down and have a rest. Your body has enough to do, expelling the alcohol from its system, without having to try to do other things as well.
- Don't attempt to drive. It takes the liver one hour to get rid of one unit of alcohol. You may still be well over the legal limit the day after. Studies also show that even when people have no alcohol in their system the day after, their ability to perform skilled tasks is impaired.
- Never be tempted to have a 'hair of the dog'. This is dangerous as it can lead to physical dependence. Only time will make you feel better, so try to grin and bear it, and learn from the experience.

and a happy new year

Alcohol Problems Advisory Service

alcoline (0115) 941 4747

Lo-call 0845 7626316

e mail: apas@apas.org.uk

www.apas.org.uk

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