

well-being

hangover helper

NEWS FROM L.A.'S
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ANYONE WHO WANTS to know how bad a hangover can be should ask someone who's knocked back 11 belly button shots of rotgut tequila in one night and lived to tell about it.

(Really, really bad. We're talking skull-splitting, wish-you-were-dead bad. But I digress.) The common response to postbender agony is to swear off alcohol forever and commit to a life of joyless abstinence. "Being perfect is boring," insists Sally Kravich, a certified natural-health professional with offices in New York and Los Angeles and the woman who keeps the engines of Hollywood hotshots like Vanessa L. Williams purring. "Lots of things, including drinking and partying and having a good time, are fine in moderation." With that in mind, here's how to have your tequila and drink it, too.



hangover 101

There are those who believe that a hangover is a psychosomatic manifestation of guilt about overindulging. (These people should be shot.) But most experts agree that the painful aftermath of a drinking binge boils down to dehydration. "Alcohol inhibits the formation of ADH, or antidiuretic hormone," explains Micheline Hansen, R.D., corporate dietitian for Albertsons supermarkets. "Even though you're consuming massive quantities of liquid, your body is programmed to eliminate more than you're taking in." Get schnockered on cocktails with sodium (Bloody Marys) or caffeine (coffee drinks, anything and Coke), and the effects will be magnified.

Others blame day-after decrepitude on alcoholic impurities called congeners, which are by-products of fermentation and distillation (not to be confused with Congers, which are women who marry millionaires for publicity and profit). It stands to reason, then, that highly refined spirits such as Casa Noble tequila (triple distilled and smooth as honey) and Chopin vodka (sweet, clean rye flavor) are among the least likely to leave a cruel reminder of the night before.

"Most people react strongly to alcohol that has a high concentration of sugar and grain, such as beer, whiskey, and bour-

bon," says Kravich. As long as you stick to top-shelf stuff, switching refreshments isn't necessarily a no-no; hangover potential is directly related to the overall quantity—and quality—of sauce consumed. Lighter liquors tend to be safest, although champagne and sparkling wines of any color can also be lethal.

"Food and drink pass from the stomach to the small intestine through the pyloric valve," explains James Schaefer, Ph.D., a research professor of anthropology at Union College in Schenectady, New York. "Carbonated drinks—and that includes mixers—force this valve to open very quickly, causing the alcohol to be absorbed almost immediately."

If abandoning beer, bourbon, and bubbly isn't an option, the key is to slow the rate at which the body absorbs alcohol.

first things first

Most people know that drinking on an empty stomach can be dangerous. What they may not know is the precise type and amount of food that can help prevent a nasty fun-burn. "Your stomach is like a big melting pot where everything gets