Over-the-counter (OTC) hangover meds?

Dear Alice,

We've noticed that students at our college are asking about these new over-the-counter hangover meds. As student health educators, we don't know where to go for more accurate information on this subject. Do you have any, or can you help us find it?

Thank you,
Curious Peer Educators

Answer

Dear Curious Peer Educators,

From Bloody Marys and barley grass to peanuts and painkillers, it might seem as though just about anything can be touted as a hangover helper. Although several studies have looked into a long list of these products, the only trick that seems to work all the time, every time, is, well, time! With luck, hangovers typically disappear between 8 to 24 hours after they begin.

What is known is that some actions can actually make a hangover worse and even contribute to additional health risks. These include:

- Taking acetaminophen after drinking alcohol, as it can possibly harm the liver.
- Popping a couple of aspirin, as this could make a sour stomach even worse.
- Drinking a bit more alcohol. It may help to feel better again in the short run, but this only prolongs the inevitable hangover.

On the plus side, there are few ways to help diminish (but not instantly cure) a hangover, such as:

- Drinking water: Since alcohol can act as a diuretic driving water out of the body, consuming lots of water can help the body to recover more quickly and prevent dehydration.
- Eating: Sticking to protein and complex carbohydrates such as eggs and toast may help settle the stomach.
- Getting rest: Hopefully the hangover will be gone or reduced upon waking up.

Of course, the only foolproof way to avoid getting a hangover is to not drink any alcoholic...
beverages at all. If that's not in the game plan, you can check out Avoid hangover? [2] in the Go Ask Alice! archives and the related Q&As for more tips on pre-party planning that won’t result in an achy morning after.

Cheers,

Alice!

Category:
Alcohol & Other Drugs [3]
Alcohol [4]
Prescription & Over-the-Counter-Drugs [5]

Related questions

Hangover helper and tips for healthy drinking [6]
Bonding with teammates without alcohol? [7]
How can I be responsible while drinking? [8]

Published date:
Jun 13, 2008
Last reviewed on:
Aug 02, 2019

Go Ask Alice! is not an emergency or instant response service.

If you are in an urgent situation, please visit our Emergency page to view a list of 24 hour support services and hotlines.

Source URL: https://goaskalice.columbia.edu/answered-questions/over-counter-otc-hangover-meds

Links