



# JANUARY 2017 VEISALGIA

Veisalgia sounds terrible doesn't it? Before you start your internet search, if you welcomed the New Year in the traditional manner, it is likely that you have contracted at least a mild strain of it. Veisalgia is the medical term for a hangover. A hangover is the collective term for the unpleasant physical conditions that often follow the over consumption of alcohol. Despite its very scientific name, from the Norwegian *kveis* (uneasiness following debauchery) and the Greek *algia* (pain), scientists do not fully understand veisalgia's metabolic cause nor do they have a cure. There are, however, many theories and 100's of remedies.

## METABOLISM OF ALCOHOL

From the moment it enters the body, alcohol has special privileges. Unlike food, it doesn't require digestion. On an empty stomach, as much as 20% passes directly into the blood stream and can reach the brain in as little as a minute. Ten percent escapes through breath, perspiration and urine. The remainder is broken down first in the stomach and then in the liver by an enzyme called alcohol dehydrogenase (ADH). The level of ADH present in individuals determines the rate at which the alcohol begins metabolizing. ADH varies by gender and ancestry. Women have less than men. Certain Native American, Australian Aboriginal and Asian populations have none whatsoever. Regardless of the amount of ADH, the liver can process a maximum of one half ounce of alcohol per hour.

## CAUSES OF A HANGOVER

Conventional thinking holds that dehydration and poor sleep cause hangovers. These are in fact symptoms, not causes. Scientists posit that veisalgia results from the liver's inability to vary its rate of eliminating alcohol and its metabolites. This is further compounded by the type of liquor consumed. The higher the congener content, the more likely and/or severe the hangover will be. Congeners are byproducts of the fermentation process that contribute toward the distinguishing flavors and aromas of beverages. Generally, the darker the liquor, the higher the congener content. As the metabolites and the congeners make their way through the body, they inflame the stomach, disrupt immunity, and hijack the liver away from its normal functions. Blood vessels expand. Blood sugar drops. Since alcohol is a toxin, the body works doubly hard to expel it through perspiration, breath and urine. Hence the varying degrees of thirst, nausea, headache, irritation, fatigue, and general malaise of a hangover.





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## PREVENTION AND TREATMENT OF A HANGOVER

Raw eggs? Burnt toast? Hair of the dog? Pickled herring? Coffee? As with most things, the best cure is prevention. If you choose to indulge, follow a few simple rules.



**1** Make sure to have a snack with your beverage. Food will slow down its absorption.



**2** Pace yourself. While you may have plenty of ADH, your liver can only eliminate alcohol at a rate of one drink an hour.



**3** Alternate your drinks with water. Alcohol is a diuretic.



**4** Avoid carbonated beverages. Bubbles speed up absorption.

The ultimate prevention is to skip the cocktails entirely. If you don't drink, you won't get a hangover. But if that ship has already sailed, the best you can hope for is treating the symptoms and waiting it out.



**1** Do drink plenty of water.



**2** Don't compound a hangover headache by skipping your regular morning coffee. Caffeine withdrawal will make it worse.



**3** Do eat breakfast, preferably one that includes eggs (to hasten detoxification) and a banana (to replace lost minerals).



**4** Take ibuprofen (Advil) not acetaminophen (Tylenol) for the headache. Acetaminophen is tougher on the liver and it is busy enough already.

Regardless of how you welcomed the New Year, I hope that your 2017 is happy and healthy.



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Patricia M. Fuller has dedicated the last 19 years to designing and delivering wellness programs. Her events earn consistently excellent ratings for her holistic approach and her real world application.

Prior to concentrating in wellness, Pat taught accounting and auditing as an adjunct professor at the University of Tampa. She earned her CPA designation in 1992 as a senior associate for Coopers & Lybrand. She has a Masters in Business Administration from the University of Utah.

Pat has a PhD in holistic nutrition. In 2010, she was board certified by the Holistic Nutrition Credentialing Board. Her areas of research include stress management and eating habits. She is a Certified Wellcoach and a member of the Institute of Coaching. She is an annual attendee to The Harvard Medical School Conference, Coaching In Leadership & Healthcare.

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