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Hangover cures do not work

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25 December, 2005

THE ARTICLE

Hangover cures do not work

In what will come as a shock to party revelers the world over, a study in the *British Medical Journal* reports there is no cure for hangovers. The only effective way of avoiding the pounding headache and nausea is to practice abstinence or drink in moderation, researchers claim. Research leader Max Pittler of Exeter University in the U.K. found a lack of conclusive research into hangovers. He wrote: "The paucity of randomized controlled trials is in stark contrast to the plethora of 'hangover cures' marketed on the Internet." His conclusion was plain and simple and perhaps little consolation for those feeling like death warmed up: "No compelling evidence exists to suggest that any conventional or complementary intervention is effective for preventing or treating alcohol hangover."

Hangovers are costly to many businesses worldwide. They account for nearly \$3.5 billion in lost wages every year in the UK alone. Unfortunately for hangover sufferers, the self-inflicted nature of symptoms brought on by excessive imbibing in alcohol are not accepted by employers as a legitimate ill. Workers are expected to nurse their headaches and soldier on through their day. Of even greater concern is the number of fatalities attributed to alcoholic poisoning. The researchers observed that the number of deaths caused by excessive drinking rises by 0.4 percent for every one percent increase in liquor sales. Aside from the magical hangover cure, researchers need to ascertain why the debilitating effects of hangovers do not deter further over-drinking.

Source: <http://bmj.bmjournals.com/cgi/content/full/331/7531/1515?ehom>

WARM-UPS

1. DRUNKS: What do you think of drunks? Do you think being drunk is acceptable social behavior? Why is drunkenness accepted in some countries but not others? How would you explain alcohol and drunkenness to an alien?

2. CURES: What do you do / suggest for a hangover? With your partner(s), talk about the “cures” below. Are they effective? Why do people recommend them?

- Abstinence
- Sleep
- Headache pills
- Lots of water
- Coffee
- Hair of the dog (more alcohol)
- Multivitamins
- Shower

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

Shocks / party revelers / hangover cures / pounding headaches / nausea / abstinence / sick days / alcoholic poisoning / nurses / excessive drinking / magic

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. EFFECTS: A hangover is just one of the effects or consequences of over-drinking. Talk about these other effects. Are they good reasons to ban alcohol as a dangerous drug? What can be done to limit the damage caused by alcohol?

- a. Drunk drivers kill millions of people around the world every year.
- b. Alcohol-related illnesses are a massive drain on public health services.
- c. Domestic violence increases because of alcohol.
- d. Soccer hooliganism stems from alcohol.
- e. Reduced worker productivity from hangovers dampens productivity.
- f. Underage drinking is on the increase.
- g. Women who drink while pregnant damage their unborn baby’s health.

5. ALCOHOL OPINIONS: How far do you agree with these opinions?

- a. Alcohol should be classified as a dangerous drug.
- b. The fact that drunkenness is socially acceptable reflects badly on society.
- c. It is sad that people need to drink to have a good time.
- d. Drunks are obnoxious.
- e. People have no right to abuse their bodies by drinking alcohol.
- f. If a worker cannot work well due to a hangover, he/she should lose pay.
- g. It’s strange that alcohol is legal but marijuana is illegal.
- h. Alcohol increases sexual promiscuity, STDs and unwanted pregnancies.

6. HANGOVER: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word “hangover”. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- a. The *Weekly Hangover Journal* said there are no cures for hangovers. T / F
- b. Abstinence or moderation are the only ways of staying hangover-free. T / F
- c. There is a plethora of hangover "cures" on the Internet. T / F
- d. A lot of compelling evidence exists to suggest we can treat hangovers. T / F
- e. Workers with hangovers lose businesses billions of dollars each year. T / F
- f. Most employers will turn a blind eye to workers with a hangover. T / F
- g. Soldiers can go to a special hangover nurse when they over-imbibe. T / F
- h. A hangover is the most effective deterrent to prevent over-drinking. T / F

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|-------------------|----------------|
| a. party revelers | avoidance |
| b. pounding | incapacitating |
| c. abstinence | dearth |
| d. paucity | care for |
| e. stark | party animals |
| f. plethora | avert |
| g. imbibing | drinking |
| h. nurse | thumping |
| i. debilitating | absolute |
| j. deter | profusion |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| a. come as a shock to party revelers | abstinence or drink in moderation |
| b. avoiding the pounding | nature of symptoms |
| c. practice | like death warmed up |
| d. in stark contrast to the | headache and nausea |
| e. little consolation for those feeling | effects of hangovers |
| f. the self-inflicted | further over-drinking |
| g. nurse their headaches and soldier | the world over |
| h. the number of fatalities attributed | on through their day |
| i. the debilitating | plethora of 'hangover cures' |
| j. hangovers do not deter | to alcoholic poisoning |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

Hangover cures do not work

In what will come as a _____ to party revelers the world _____, a study in the *British Medical Journal* reports there is no cure for hangovers. The only _____ way of avoiding the pounding headache and _____ is to practice abstinence or drink in moderation, researchers claim. Research leader Max Pittler of Exeter University in the U.K. found a lack of conclusive research into hangovers. He wrote: "The _____ of randomized controlled trials is in stark contrast to the _____ of 'hangover cures' marketed on the Internet." His conclusion was plain and simple and perhaps little consolation for those feeling like _____ warmed up: "No _____ evidence exists to suggest that any conventional or complementary intervention is effective for preventing or treating alcohol hangover."

paucity

over

nausea

compelling

shock

death

effective

plethora

Hangovers are _____ to many businesses worldwide. They account for nearly \$3.5 billion in lost wages every year in the UK _____. Unfortunately for hangover sufferers, the self-_____ nature of symptoms brought on by excessive imbibing in alcohol are not accepted by employers as a _____ ill. Workers are expected to nurse their headaches and _____ on through their day. Of even greater concern is the number of fatalities attributed to alcoholic _____. The researchers observed that the number of deaths caused by excessive drinking rises by 0.4 percent for every one percent increase in liquor sales. Aside from the _____ hangover cure, researchers need to ascertain why the debilitating effects of hangovers do not _____ further over-drinking.

poisoning

legitimate

alone

deter

costly

magical

inflicted

soldier

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Hangover cures do not work

In what will come as a shock to party _____ the world over, a study in the *British Medical Journal* reports there is no cure for hangovers. The only effective way of avoiding the _____ headache and nausea is to practice _____ or drink in moderation, researchers claim. Research leader Max Pittler of Exeter University in the U.K. found a lack of conclusive research into hangovers. He wrote: "The _____ of randomized controlled trials is in stark contrast to the _____ of 'hangover cures' marketed on the Internet." His conclusion was plain and simple and perhaps little consolation for those feeling like death _____: "No compelling evidence exists to suggest that any conventional or complementary intervention is _____ for preventing or treating alcohol hangover."

Hangovers are costly to many businesses worldwide. They _____ for nearly \$3.5 billion in lost wages every year in the UK alone. Unfortunately for hangover sufferers, the self-_____ nature of symptoms brought on by excessive imbibing in alcohol are not accepted by employers as a _____ ill. Workers are expected to nurse their headaches and _____ through their day. Of even greater concern is the number of fatalities attributed to alcoholic _____. The researchers observed that the number of deaths caused by _____ drinking rises by 0.4 percent for every one percent increase in liquor sales. Aside from the magical hangover cure, researchers need to ascertain why the _____ effects of hangovers do not deter further over-drinking.

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'hang' and 'over'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "HANGOVER" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about alcohol, drinking, drunkenness and hangovers.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- shock
- avoiding
- lack
- stark
- death
- compelling
- costly
- alone
- ill
- soldier
- 0.4 percent
- debilitating

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. What do you know about hangovers?
- c. Why do you think scientists know so little about hangovers?
- d. Do you need alcohol or any other drug to help you have a good time at a party?
- e. Why do you think many societies accept alcohol when it causes so much social harm?
- f. Do you think workers should lose pay if their performance decreases because of a hangover?
- g. Why do you think people keep suggesting "cures" for hangovers when none of them works?
- h. Do you ever get bad headaches?
- i. Do you think people who drink regularly should pay more for medical insurance?
- j. Whose fault is it that underage drinking is on the increase?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. What do you think of people who complain about having a hangover?
- d. What do you think of drunk people?
- e. Do you think alcohol should be banned?
- f. Have you ever felt like death warmed up?
- g. What do you think the penalty should be for drunk driving?
- h. Do you think alcohol is a more or less dangerous drug than marijuana?
- i. Why do you think that having pounding headaches and nausea does not deter people from repeatedly over-drinking?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

DRUNK CRIMES: In pairs / groups, decide on the appropriate penalty for the “drunk crimes” in the table:

	“DRUNK CRIME”	PENALTY
1.	Having a hangover that slows you down at work or in school	
2.	Singing loudly in a built-up area	
3.	Peeing or vomiting in the street	
4.	Drunk driving	
5.	Having unprotected sex with a stranger	
6.	Domestic violence	
7.	Having smelly breath the next day	
8.	Hooliganism or vandalism	
9.	Sleeping in the park or on the beach	
10.	Asking people who don't drink to have a drink	

Change partners and tell you new partner(s) the penalties you decided with your old partner(s).

Combine your penalties to ones you both / all agree on.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on cures for hangovers. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

3. HEADACHE HISTORY: Write about the most memorable headaches you've had – alcohol induced or otherwise. What did you do to relieve the pain? Show what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all have similar ideas for cures?

4. MY CULTURE: Write a short essay on the part alcohol plays in your culture. Do you think this is a good or bad thing? Show what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did everyone write about similar things?

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. T c. T d. F e. T f. F g. F h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|-----------------|----------------|
| a. pounding | thumping |
| b. abstinence | avoidance |
| c. paucity | dearth |
| d. stark | absolute |
| e. plethora | profusion |
| f. imbibing | drinking |
| g. nurse | care for |
| h. soldier on | persevere |
| i. debilitating | incapacitating |
| j. deter | avert |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| a. come as a shock to party revelers | the world over |
| b. avoiding the pounding | headache and nausea |
| c. practice | abstinence or drink in moderation |
| d. in stark contrast to the | plethora of 'hangover cures' |
| e. little consolation for those feeling | like death warmed up |
| f. the self-inflicted | nature of symptoms |
| g. nurse their headaches and soldier | on through their day |
| h. the number of fatalities attributed | to alcoholic poisoning |
| i. the debilitating | effects of hangovers |
| j. hangovers do not deter | further over-drinking |

GAP FILL:

Hangover cures do not work

In what will come as a **shock** to party revelers the world **over**, a study in the *British Medical Journal* reports there is no cure for hangovers. The only **effective** way of avoiding the pounding headache and **nausea** is to practice abstinence or drink in moderation, researchers claim. Research leader Max Pittler of Exeter University in the U.K. found a lack of conclusive research into hangovers. He wrote: "The **paucity** of randomized controlled trials is in stark contrast to the **plethora** of 'hangover cures' marketed on the Internet." His conclusion was plain and simple and perhaps little consolation for those feeling like **death** warmed up: "No **compelling** evidence exists to suggest that any conventional or complementary intervention is effective for preventing or treating alcohol hangover."

Hangovers are **costly** to many businesses worldwide. They account for nearly \$3.5 billion in lost wages every year in the UK **alone**. Unfortunately for hangover sufferers, the self-**inflicted** nature of symptoms brought on by excessive imbibing in alcohol are not accepted by employers as a **legitimate** ill. Workers are expected to nurse their headaches and **soldier** on through their day. Of even greater concern is the number of fatalities attributed to alcoholic **poisoning**. The researchers observed that the number of deaths caused by excessive drinking rises by 0.4 percent for every one percent increase in liquor sales. Aside from the **magical** hangover cure, researchers need to ascertain why the debilitating effects of hangovers do not **deter** further over-drinking.