

★★★★★★ The Hangover Intensity Scale ★★★★★★

In preparation for the festive season, here is a cautionary guide to what to expect the morning after (as if we need to tell you!).

1-Star Hangover ★

No pain, no real feeling of illness. You slept in your own bed, and when you woke up there were no traffic cones in there with you. You are still able to function relatively well on the energy stored up from all those Vodka Red Bulls. However, you can drink 10 bottles of water and still feel as parched as the Sahara. Even vegetarians crave a cheeseburger and a bag of fries.

2-Star Hangover ★★

No pain, but something is definitely amiss. You may look OK, but you have the attention span and mental capacity of a hole punch. The coffee you hug, to try and remain focused, is only exacerbating your rumbling gut, which needs a full English breakfast. Although you have a pleasant demeanour about the office, you are costing your employer valuable money because all you can really handle is some light filing, followed by aimlessly surfing the net and writing junk e-mails.

3-Star Hangover ★★★

Slight headache, stomach feels crap. You are definitely a space cadet and not so productive. Anytime a girl or lad walks by you gag because the perfume/aftershave reminds you of the random gin shots you did with your alcoholic friends after the bouncer kicked you out at 1.45am. Life would be better right now if you were in your bed with a dozen doughnuts and a litre of Coke, watching daytime TV. You've had 2 sausage rolls, 4 cups of coffee and a gallon of water, yet you haven't peed once.

4-Star Hangover ★★★★

You have lost the will to live. Your head is throbbing and you can't speak too quickly or else you might spew. Your boss has already lambasted you for being late and has given you a lecture for reeking of booze. You wore nice clothes, but you smell of socks and you can't hide the fact that you (depending on your gender) either missed an oh-so crucial spot shaving, or put your make-up on while riding the dodgems. Your teeth have their own individual sweaters. Your eyes look like one big vein and your hairstyle is a reject from a second-year class circa 1976. You would give a week's pay for one of the following - home time, a doughnut and somewhere to be alone, or a time machine so you could go back and NOT have gone out the night before. You scare small children in the street just by walking past them.

5-Star Hangover ★★★★★

You have a second heartbeat in your head, which is actually annoying the employee who works next to you. Vodka vapour is seeping out of every pore and making you dizzy. You still have toothpaste crust in the corners of your mouth from brushing your teeth. Your body has lost the ability to generate saliva, so your tongue is suffocating you. You'd cry, but that would take the last drop of moisture left in your body. Death seems pretty good right now. Your boss doesn't even get mad at you and your co-workers think that your dog just died because you look so pathetic. You should've called in sick because, let's face it, all you can manage to do is breathe - very gently.

6-Star Hangover ★★★★★★

You arrived home and climbed into bed. Sleep came instantly, as you were fighting it all the way home in the taxi. You got about 2 hours until the noises inside your head woke you up. You notice that your bed has been cleared for take off and is flying relentlessly around the room. No matter what you do, you know you're going to chuck. You stumble out of bed and now find that you are in a yacht under full sail. After walking along the skirting boards on alternating walls, knocking off all the pictures, you find the toilet. If you are lucky you will remember to lift the lid before you explode spontaneously and wake the whole house with your impersonations of walrus mating calls. You sit there on the floor in your undies, randomly continuing to make walrus noises, spitting and belching. Help usually comes at this stage, even if it is short lived. Tears stream down your face and your abdomen hurts. Help turns into abuse and he/she usually goes back to bed leaving you there in the dark. With your stomach totally empty, your spontaneous eruptions die back to 15-minute intervals, but your body won't relent. You are convinced that you are starting to turn yourself inside out and swear that you saw your tonsils shoot out of your mouth on the last occasion. It is now dawn and you pass your disgusted partner getting up for the day. She/he abuses you again for trying to get into bed with lumpy bits of dried vomit in your hair. You reluctantly accept their advice and have a shower in exchange for them driving you to the hospital. Work is simply not an option. The whole day is spent trying to avoid anything that might make you sick again - like moving. You vow never to touch a drop again and, who knows for the next two or three hours at least, you might even succeed.

Have a very Happy Christmas and drive safely.