

John Barley, Corn Liquor and the Temptations of Eve!!

By Lou Lombardo, LMT, NCTMB

Wellness- an interactive process of becoming aware of and practicing healthy choices to create a more successful and balanced lifestyle.

I had chosen the topic of wellness for this week's column because, after all, that's the theme of this particular section of the paper.

But I changed my mind after attending this newspaper's holiday party. As a result I decided to write about hangovers.

Lest you think there was wholesale drunkenness and debauchery (*debauch-* to corrupt, to pervert, to riot, to eat & drink in excess) it was certainly none of the above- at least not while I was there.

Aside from eating some great homemade food we engaged in fine talk and sharing of recipes. And we drank the finest sparkling grape juice (November was a good year) which can hardly be deemed a powerful intoxicant.

Nevertheless, during the process of conversation it seemed to me that this a good time of the year to talk about hangovers. That's because there will be some rookies out there who will be going out for their annual drink-fest (they have no life whatsoever during the rest of the year) and they might not feel so good the next day.

And you seasoned imbibers might even be able to benefit from this information. So sit up straight, take notes and put down that beer!

To begin let's examine the causes of hangovers. The first cause is obvious- drinking too much alcohol. DUH!! That's like saying that the main cause of divorce is marriage. And the main cause of pregnancy is sex. Pretty simple stuff so far. If I'm going too fast, you didn't put down that beer like I asked you to do before.

Alcohol has one characteristic that should cause us to sit up and take note- it's poison- plain and simple. It affects so many systems of our body in an adverse way.

Alcohol enters the body at a rapid rate, smothering the frontal lobe of our brain. It releases our control of judgement and social inhibitions. That's why you hear so many reports of accidents caused by drunk drivers, not to mention unwanted liberties directed at some after a few brews at the local watering hole.

How many of you guys know what I mean?

Alcohol kills brain cells, eventually causes our liver to deteriorate and weakens our heart muscle.

If that doesn't sound important to you, please take a seat in the row marked "vegetable".

Those of you who are still with me know the value of our brain. To put in modern day terms it is the main hard drive of our bodies. It controls all of our actions- what we think, what we say and what we do.

The heart controls our cardiovascular system which pumps blood to and from every cell in our body- another very important process for survival.

And the liver has so many vital functions that I would place it with the heart and brain as the "Holy Trinity" of organs. (I may have to go to confession after using "Holy Trinity" and "organs" in the same sentence)

Suffice it to say we cannot live without a healthy brain, liver and heart.

In addition to affecting these vital organs, alcohol messes up other systems of our body. It stimulates our urinary system to produce more urine. Urinating more than usual can lead to dehydration which can cause thirst, dizziness and lightheadedness- all symptoms of a hangover.

It also irritates the lining of our stomach, increases the production of stomach acid and delays the stomach from emptying. This causes abdominal pain, nausea & vomiting- do you see a trend?

"John Barley" also lowers our blood sugar. If our blood sugar is too low, we can experience fatigue, weakness, shakiness & mood disturbance. KIDS, GET AWAY FROM THAT CANDY DISH!!

And, finally, alcohol causes blood vessels to expand which can lead to headaches- that has hangover written all over it.

If you think that I have not addressed the main topic of this column so far, you probably flunked remedial reading.

But, there is hope- stay with me. To review- hangovers are caused by drinking alcohol.

Too much alcohol depletes the body of necessary substances required to stay healthy. These include blood sugar, vitamins and minerals.

When you drink more alcohol than can be absorbed and processed by the body you will get a hangover.

Symptoms, once again, will include headaches, fatigue, dizziness, muscle ache, nausea, vomiting, rapid heart beat and all those other things that happened to you on the morning after it was legal for you to drink- or earlier for you law breakers.

The extent to which you will get drunk and suffer a hangover is related to several factors.

Such factors include your weight, the types of alcohol you are drinking, and the accompanying chasers you mix with it. And there are many precautions you can take to minimize the degree of a hangover that you might experience.

Needless to say, these are topics that can be discussed in future columns. I know. You've heard that before.

But trust me on this. The only way you can prevent hangovers is to not drink, or, if you do, drink sensibly. Know your limits. When you go out for a few, decide ahead of time how many you will have and stick to it!

So everybody- have a safe and healthy and bodacious New Year! I always wanted to use that word "bodacious"- appropriate or otherwise. And, I'll see you on the flip side.

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