

Late nights, booze, bingeing and your beauty routine.

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Most people have a small number of close friends and family members they see on a regular basis. And then there is Christmas, a time when every strained past relationship plays out under fairy lights and mistletoe.

Alcohol will take the edge off your inhibitions, making the occasions less painful if you know how to drink and can have fun doing it.

Here is an interview with Dr Irene Karatzas, ND:

M.D: What can you do to protect your skin and immune system for holiday drinking binges?

Dr K: Milk Thistle is a popular herb which helps detoxify your liver and protect your body from the toxicity of alcohol. Take two 70mg capsules with a meal before or while drinking. The skin is a major detoxification organ and usually when the liver is burdened with extra toxins the side effects become evident on the skin.

Vitamin C has been shown to stimulate the liver to break down the alcohol. Start with 1,000 mg every hour and built up to bowel tolerance. Vitamin c is also great for your immune system and your skin due to the antioxidant effects. I recommend the Buffered form of vitamin C.

M.D: Are there tricks to avoid gaining weight over Christmas and new years?

Dr K: Digestive enzymes will help you breakdown and digest those large family meals. Increased fibre intake will reduce your appetite. Some great sources of fibre include Salba and ground flax seeds, which also help regulate glucose levels and reduce sugar cravings.

Choose fruits and herbal teas instead of desserts and alcohol. Try Acai berries since they are rich in B-vitamins, minerals, fibre, and essential fatty acids and will promote weight loss. Daily walking for 30 minutes is also recommended to enhance your metabolism and increase your body's detoxification pathways.

It may be surprising to find out that alcohol actually has calories! In fact, 1 gram of alcohol has 7 calories. Here is a list for some of your favourite drinks....

1 Cosmopolitan (151 calories), 1 beer (150 calories), 1 glass of white wine 120 calories, 1 tequila shot (100 calories), 1 glass of Bailey's Irish Cream (468 calories).

M.D: What is the biggest health risk to watch for over the holiday season?

Dr K: Excessive drinking compounded with increased dessert intake is what I would consider the biggest health risk over the holiday season. The combination of alcoholic beverages with increased sugar intake has a greater negative impact on your health due to the increased risk of nutrient depletion's. Specific vitamin deficiencies due to alcohol include B Vitamins, particularly Vitamin B1.

The consumption of refined sugar also depletes the levels of B vitamins in your body, which will leave your body feeling more stressed. Sugar suppresses your immune system and so does alcohol consumption placing you at greater risk for colds/flu.

M.D: Is there a quick way to sober up?

Dr K: There is no magic way to bring your blood alcohol level down quickly. "Sobering up" requires time! Increase water intake with addition of electrolytes to your water to enhance hydration. Avoid any sweetened products with any artificial sweeteners or sugar. Herbal teas, such as green tea or ginger tea are recommended. Avoid drinking coffee because it will increase dehydration.

Also avoid the use of Tylenol or Advil due to increased liver toxicity when combining medications with alcohol.

M.D: Can you prevent a hangover?

Dr K: Ensure you are well hydrated before drinking. Also try having a meal while drinking and not drinking too quickly. Having a full stomach delays the absorption of alcohol and reduces the side effects of intoxication.

Essential fatty acids, such as olive oil and Evening primrose oil have also been suggested to delay the alcohol absorption rate and minimize side effects if taken before drinking. Considering the high potency B-complex before drinking will also prevent depletion in the first place.