

Research reveals how family history can affect your memory of hangovers

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Credit: Keele University

People with a family history of alcoholism are already known to be at a greater risk of developing a drinking problem, but new research led by Psychologist Dr Richard Stephens at Keele University has found they are also more likely to hold onto the painful memory of hangovers.

Dr Stephens' latest research paper involved two studies focusing on [hangover](#) frequency and severity.

According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism people with a family history of alcoholism are four times more likely to develop a [drinking](#) problem. Based on this, Dr Stephens' research explores whether hangovers – unpleasant effects felt the morning after

[drinking alcohol](#) – impact on this.

In the first study, 142 individuals, including 24 who had a family history of problem drinking, were asked to complete a survey about their hangovers from the last 12 months. The study found those with alcoholism in their family background recollected more frequent hangover symptoms than those who didn't have any family history of problem drinking, taking account of alcohol consumption levels.

In the second study, a group of 49 participants, including 17 who had a family history of alcoholism, were interviewed the morning after a night of drinking when any hangover symptoms would be present. The alcohol consumption levels were again controlled, but the participants with a [family history](#) of alcoholism did not show any greater signs of hangover symptoms compared to participants without any family background of problem drinking.

Dr Stephens, from Keele University, said: "We started off this research by questioning whether hangovers might impact on problem drinking, either positively by providing a natural curb on excessive drinking, or negatively should some drinkers feel compelled to drink through a hangover, known as "the hair of the dog" drinking.

"Taken together with findings from prior research it appears that people who are predisposed to develop problem drinking are no more susceptible to developing a hangover after a night of alcohol than people who are not predisposed. However, we found that such people appear to remember their hangovers more lucidly.

"It may be possible to exploit this lucid memory for hangovers to curb [excessive drinking](#). Reminding problem drinkers of the negative consequences of incapacitating hangover, for example, letting down family members due to abandoned plans, may help them to manage their

[alcohol](#) consumption."

More information: Richard Stephens et al. Does familial risk for alcohol use disorder predict alcohol hangover?, *Psychopharmacology* (2017). [DOI: 10.1007/s00213-017-4585-x](https://doi.org/10.1007/s00213-017-4585-x)

Provided by Keele University

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