

ALCOHOL HANGOVERS AMONG MALE AND FEMALE SOCIAL DRINKERS: DO THEY DIFFER?

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Introduction: Men and women differ significantly in severity levels of acute alcohol intoxication symptoms, even after correcting for body weight, amount of alcohol consumed, and estimated peak blood alcohol concentration (eBAC). This study examined whether there are similar gender differences in the presence and severity of alcohol hangover symptoms.

Method: Survey data from N=2547 Dutch students (male = 44.5% female= 55.5%) was used to analyze possible gender differences in the presence and severity of 22 hangover symptoms, experienced on their past month heaviest drinking occasion. Symptoms were scored on an 11-point scale ranging from 0 (absent) to 10 (extreme). The analysis were conducted separately for different eBAC ranges, including < 0.08%, 0.08% - 0.11%, 0.11% – 0.20%, 0.20% – 0.30%, and 0.30% - 0.40%.

Results: In the lowest (<0.08%) and highest (0.30% – 0.40%) eBAC range no significant gender differences were found. In the eBAC range 0.08% - 0.11%, significantly higher severity scores of nausea were reported by women. Most drinkers were allocated to the eBAC range of 0.11% to 0.20%. At this drinking level, women reported significantly higher severity scores on nausea, tiredness, weakness, and dizziness than men. Men reported significantly more often the presence of confusion, whereas women reported significantly more often the presence of shivering. In the eBAC range 0.20%-0.30% women reported higher severity of nausea and tiredness.

Discussions and Conclusions: During alcohol hangover, severity scores of nausea and tiredness were usually higher in women than men.

Implications for practice: Although statistically significant gender differences were observed, these differences were of small magnitude (i.e. less than 1 on a scale of 0 to 10), and therefore have little clinical relevance.

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