



The use of chemical colours during Holi can prove disastrous as these increase chances of allergies and infections

How to avoid bhang hangover



Adopt these simple measures to get rid of the after-effects of consuming the intoxicant

DR ANUKALP PRAKASH

THE festival of Holi is not just associated with colours, but loads of revelry. It is one of the few festivals where having *bhang* dishes and *thandai* are an integral part of celebrations. From *pakoras*, *thandai* to brownies, *bhang* is served in a bunch of forms during Holi.

Bhang is also known as cannabis, *ganja* and *charas* and is a healing agent in Ayurveda. In ancient times, these herbs were utilised to cure diseases, and even today many think that it is beneficial but people should exercise caution while consuming *bhang*. Despite its benefits which have not been proven yet, Ayurveda experts advise having *bhang* in limited amounts.

Prepared by mixing ground *bhang* leaves with condensed milk, dry fruit-nuts paste, rose petals, *kesar* etc. *thandai* is not only an intoxicating drink but a tasty one as well. Hence the chances of over consumption are high and untoward incidents after consuming it are common.

However, consuming *bhang* in excess can cause dehydration, nausea and headache. "*Bhang* spreads at a quick rate in the body. So when utilised in decent amount and in combination with other medicines, it can work wonders. As instead of ethanol, *bhang* activates bodily functions, so the hangover is quite different from what is experienced after having alcohol. One should not consume more than 500mg of *bhang* as it might be destructive, advise experts.

There are several other side-effects, especially hallucination. Much of the side-effects depend on the quality of the *bhang* consumed. There are high chances that *bhang* bought from a roadside stall could be spurious in nature and can create more problems than it can cure.

Holi is a festival of fun and mirth and anything that adds to its flavour is welcome. However, if you exercise a little caution and restraint, unfavourable incidents that may affect this enjoyable festival can be avoided.

—The writer is senior consultant, gastroenterology, Paras Hospitals, Gurgaon

Precautions

■ Don't consume *bhang* or *bhang*-laced delicacies on an empty stomach. Always eat something first.



■ But avoid eating fried and heavy food. It tends to worsen the after-effects.

■ Drink lots of water and fluids so that the toxins keep flushing out.

■ Do not take painkillers after consuming *bhang* as these tend to cause acidity which further aggravates the headache.

■ People suffering from high blood pressure and heart diseases should never consume *bhang*.

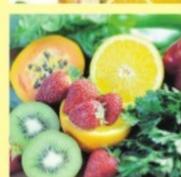


Cure

■ Drink lemon water as it is rich in vitamin C and antioxidants. It helps to get rid of nausea.

■ For a post-*bhang* detox, eat fresh fruits, salad and drink juices. Fibre will help clean out the stomach. Laxatives like Isabgol and Triphala also help.

■ A cup of black tea or coffee helps by suppressing *bhang*'s effects in the brain.



Guard your skin

DR RINKY KAPOOR

HOLI is a festival of fun and frolic. A festival celebrated with plenty of colours and zeal, the tradition is to wish a happy Holi by smearing or sprinkling colours each other. Till a few decades ago the Holi colours were derived from natural sources like dry or fresh flowers and leaves, etc. Even sandalwood paste, saffron, turmeric, henna and fuller's earth were also used to play Holi.

However, with changing times and quick-fix solutions came industrial colours that rapidly replaced the natural ones as these were cheaper options available easily. These colours are inexpensive dyes made using various chemical processes and include a variety of harmful compounds such as malachite green, auramine, methyl violet, copper sulphate, aluminium bromide, prussian blue and cobalt nitrate. Mixed with starch or wheat flour and mica dust, the colours are disastrous for the skin as these increase chances of allergies and infections even in otherwise healthy skin textures.

As a result, Holi can cause various skin and other allergies and inflammation. These problems characteristically present themselves during or few days after Holi and the condition is also popularly known as Holi dermatoses. Those who have had allergies in the past, here's a quick lowdown on the harms of using chemical colours, the best cure for the resulting conditions and a guide to keep skin safe and healthy.

Symptoms

Holi dermatoses can manifest itself in various forms:

- Itching in eyes and other areas
- Burning sensation
- Pain

- Oozing
 - Scaling
 - Lesions
 - Erosions
 - Blisters
 - Dryness
 - Redness
 - Bumps
 - Acute nail-fold inflammation
 - Abrasions
 - Aggravation of pre-existing dermatoses such as acne, eczema, and paronychia
- The face is the most commonly affected because this is where the colours are mostly applied. Hands are also commonly affected as again these are most used in mixing and handling of colours. Other common areas include the scalp, forearms, neck and thighs.
- Rubbing hands vigorously or on the face and scalp to rub in the colours can cause tiny abrasions on the skin leading to infections and inflammations as dermatoses are usually related to the irritant, allergic contact and mechanical factors.

Treatment

Itching, burning, and other unpleasant sensations or reactions on the skin should be treated immediately. Wash off any colour or paint on the skin instantly with cold water and visit a dermatologist to get the right treatment. Various treatments that the doctor might suggest can include:

- Application of corticosteroid ointments to the affected areas to reduce the symptoms.
- Antibiotics and antifungal creams to heal the skin.
- Soothing ointments to combat dryness.
- Washing skin with mild pH friendly soaps that do not have any harsh dyes.
- Oral medicines for severe reactions.

Prevention

Some precautions observed beforehand can go a long way to prevent the onset and aggravation of such skin conditions.

- Use organic or natural colours. You can also make some colours at home like by mixing turmeric with some roasted chickpea powder to make *gulal* along with finely powdered hibiscus flower to get a deep hue of red.
 - For those having a hypersensitive skin, eczemas, psoriasis, and other eczematous skin conditions, it is best to avoid colour contact, at least with chemical colours.
 - Apply coconut oil on your hair and scalp before playing Holi to prevent the colour from blocking the pores.
 - Apply aloe vera gel and oil on your body to create a layer of protection on the skin. Don't forget to cover the ear area.
 - If any kind of colour gets in your eyes, wash them immediately. Don't blink too much to get the colour out of your eyes as it will only cause damage.
 - Use sun screen on the skin to avoid skin damage.
 - For lips, use Vaseline to keep these moisturised throughout. You can apply Vaseline to the ears as well.
 - Apply transparent nail paint on the nails and also on the inside of the nails to prevent the colour from getting inside the skin.
 - Stay hydrated at all times by drinking water and juices regularly.
- Follow these simple tips to keep your skin safe and enjoy Holi.

—The writer is consultant dermatologist, at The Esthetic Clinics & Fortis Hospitals, Mumbai.



Post-Holi care

Once the festivities are over, here are some suggestions for skin care:

- Rinse face and body with plenty of water.
- Clean the skin with baby oil. Do not scrub the skin for at least 48 hours after Holi.
- Use natural ingredients like curd and chickpea flour to exfoliate the skin and cleanse it.



- After bathing, apply moisturiser liberally all over the body to seal the moisture in.
- Get your skin treated immediately if you notice anything different.
- Do not bleach, shave, wax or go for facials or clean-ups for few weeks.
- Avoid using makeup or anything harsh on your skin for a few days. Let your skin breathe and get back its natural moisture.

Don't go off-colour

DR MANJEETA NATH DAS

THE festival of colours can be enjoyed in a safe way. Most people play Holi using both dry colours and coloured water. Many of us dislike colours as these may damage the skin and hair. As the festival comes close, many of us try to find various excuses on how to avoid friends who relish playing this festival.

However, by adopting some basic preventive measures we can avoid the damage to our hair and skin while enjoying the festival.

Choose colours wisely: Go for good quality light and organic colours. If someone comes to your home, share your own colours instead of playing with the chemical colours they may have brought. Carry your own colours to others people's homes or public places as well. Use right kind of colours and avoid using toxic materials such as paints, grease etc.

Oil your hair: Proper oiling of hair is a must to guard against colours. Your scalp should be well-oiled. Colours do not stick to a lubricated scalp. You can use coconut, mustard, olive or castor oil. After Holi, it is possible that some colours may remain stuck in your hair. To remove the colours gradually, for a few days oil your hair every night and wash next morning.

Cover yourself: It is advisable to cover oneself up as much as possible. This will prevent colour from harm-

ing your skin directly and act as the best physical protection. Both men and women can wear full-sleeves clothes and use bandanas to protect their skin and hair.

Apply cream: Applying a good barrier cream all over your body before playing with colours will help to protect the skin. A good sunscreen acts as a barrier between the skin and chemicals in colours. As soon as you feel irritation or itching, wash away the colour with plenty of water. Don't scratch but consult a dermatologist if itching persists or any rash develops. Use petroleum jelly over lips, ears and other sensitive areas to lock the colour from getting inside.

Avoid sitting in sun after playing with colours: Sitting in the sun after playing Holi makes the colours go dry and stick hard on the skin.

Get a shower: After Holi, have a bath as early as possible. This gives the colours less time to get dry and stick on hair and scalp.

Use a mild shampoo: Use lukewarm water to wash hair. Use a light or a herbal shampoo and a good quality conditioner as well.

Adopting these simple measures before and after the festival can make it an enjoyable experience.

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