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**Workout a day can keep the hangovers at bay**

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After a big night, Marcel Bray heads to the University of Sydney’s Arena gym. “It relieves the hangover,” says the aeronautical engineering student. “You sweat out the alcohol. You get into the swing of things and you can carry on through the day.”

Now scientists have discovered that the benefits of a post-party workout last a lot longer than 24 hours. An international study led by the university has found exercise offsets the risk of an early death from diseases caused by­ ­alcohol.

The study, reported today in the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, crunched data on more than 35,000 Britons compiled over 12 years. It found that even modest physical activity could reduce or eliminate the mortal risks posed by drinking.

Senior author Emmanuel Stamatakis, from Sydney University’s Charles Perkins Centre, says ­people should not view exercise as a licence to binge. “But given that so many people drink, our study gives another compelling reason to be physically active,’’ Dr ­Stamatakis said.

The analysis ­unearthed a “dose-responsive” ­relationship ­between alcohol and premature death, with the risk rising the more people drank. The added danger evaporated among moderate and even heavy drinkers who were also physically active. “It is a very striking effect,” Dr Stamatakis said. “It seems to neutralise the ­association completely.”

Only people who drank at “harmful” levels – 40 or more standard drinks a week for men, or more than 28 for women – did not accrue the life insurance benefits of exercise.

Arena trainer Jeremy Roff says there is a “big culture” of drinking in most universities, and many students compensate by exercising. “They might be looking a bit under the weather, but they still come in as much as they can.

“It’s kind of that Catch 22 of if I work out extra hard, I can have more drinks tonight. (But) in general, people have a bit more knowledge and are wary of their health and longevity.”

International business student Frankie Darcey, who works out six days a week, says it makes her feel better physically and mentally and helps her focus on her studies.

She says university ­students in particular understand the pay-offs from physical activity. “Most ­people are more educated about the benefits of exercising, both the long-term and short-term benefits,’’ Ms Darcey said.

Dr Stamatakis said people had only to meet the minimum recommended level of physical activity — 2.5 hours a week of moderate intensity activity such as brisk walking — to experience the protective advantages. Exercising twice as much did not make much difference. This was a “very encouraging message”, given that more than half of Australian adults did not meet the minimum recommendation.