

BBC Learning English

The English We Speak

16 September 2014

Hair of the dog



- Feifei:** Hi Rob. Nice to see you here! I love this coffee shop by the park. And because it's outside, I can bring Fido with me.
- Rob:** Hello Feifei. Don't bark so loud, Fido... Oh dear... My head hurts so much...
- Feifei:** Oh, I didn't want to say it but... well, you don't look well, Rob!
- Rob:** I've got a hangover. I went to the pub yesterday to watch the football...
- Feifei:** ...and you had too much to drink?
- Rob:** Yes. Let's see: I had a beer after the first goal, and then two more... before Finn bought a bottle of whisky... and he told us to have just a small glass...
- Feifei:** Or half a bottle! After all this alcohol, there's nothing better than a good strong coffee! Oh, there's Finn. Hi Finn!
- Rob:** Hi Finn.
- Finn:** Fido – good boy! Hi Feifei! Hi Rob! Great match yesterday, eh?! I'd love a beer. Fancy one? Hair of the dog, you know?
- Rob:** Yeah, OK, go on then. The best thing for this hangover is the hair of the dog.
- Feifei:** The hair of the dog? Is it what you use here in Britain to cure a hangover?!
- Rob:** It's just what we say. Isn't it, Fido?
- Feifei:** Well, luckily I do have a pair of scissors in my bag. Come on, Fido. I'm just going to cut a little bit of your lovely long hair.
- Rob:** Feifei, no need to cut Fido's hair! In English, when we say 'the hair of the dog', we mean a small alcoholic drink which you have to cure a hangover. It's just an expression. Finn just offered me a beer.
- Feifei:** Oh, what an odd expression!
- Rob:** Well, apparently it comes from the phrase 'the hair of the dog that bit me'. It's a reference to a medieval belief that when someone was bitten by a dog with the disease rabies, they could be cured by putting the same dog's hair onto the infected wound. Let's hear examples of how to use this expression in today's The English We Speak.

Examples

The doctor told Jane to take a couple of painkillers and to drink plenty of water. He said that would be much better than the hair of the dog!

Alan felt better after drinking a Bloody Mary in the morning. His mate said the best cure for a hangover is the hair of the dog.

Feifei: So this is a very old expression. Although I think the best cure for a hangover is not to drink too much in the first place.

Finn: I drink to that! Cheers!

Rob: Cheers! No more drinking for me for a while. Thank you for your concern, Feifei. And your hair is all yours, Fido.

Rob: For me... it's just coffee today! Bye!

Finn: And I drink to that too. Cheers!