



衛生署
Department of Health

For Young
People

Uncovering Hidden Harms of Alcohol



Don't be deceived

Scientific research has not found effective ways to sober you up!

Popular hangover cures lack scientific evidence. Drugs (e.g. vitamin, aspirin) can only temporarily relieve some hangover symptoms. The most effective way is **not to drink**.



The World Health Organization has **never advised** that "moderate" drinking protects our heart. It's controversial whether moderate drinking is good for our heart. Drinking too much red wine or other alcoholic drinks can be however harmful and **lead to heart disease and cancers**.

Is it worthwhile to drink a proven toxic substance for heart protection?

Red face after drinking does not mean anything!

The alcohol flushing response is related to an enzyme (acetaldehyde dehydrogenase) responsible for breaking down alcohol. People deficient in this enzyme get flushed after drinking alcohol more easily. However, this cannot be used to determine whether the amount of alcohol consumed is beyond tolerance of the body.

Alcohol cannot relieve stress!

Alcohol stimulates hormone release by the hypothalamus, a part of the brain which influences emotions, and induces stress response. This creates a vicious cycle. The more stressful you are, the more you drink, possibly leading to alcoholism.

Harms of alcohol

World Health Organization pointed out:

Lead to about

3,300,000

deaths worldwide per year!

Lead to over **200** disease and injury conditions, e.g. alcohol dependence, mental illness, cirrhosis, hepatitis, stroke, heart disease, cancers...



Healthy liver



"Scarred" liver

- Like tobacco, alcohol is classified as a **Group 1 cancer-causing agent** and can lead to cancers of the oral cavity, throat, voice box, food pipe, liver, large bowel and female breasts.
- There is no safe level of exposure to any cancer-causing agent; **even a small amount of alcohol can lead to cancers**. The more you drink, the higher risk.

Also leads to other serious problems, e.g. drunkenness, family violence, sexual assault and road traffic accidents...

In Hong Kong,

- 2,475 people were admitted to hospitals in 2014 due to alcohol use.
- 48 drink-driving accidents happened in 2014.

A young adult died after drinking whisky mixed with green tea

A 24-year-old man fell comatose on the way home in a taxi after gathering with friends in a bar in Mongkok. He was suspected to have drunk a large amount of "black label whisky mixed with green tea". He was then sent to hospital but certified dead on arrival. He had smoking and drinking habits and rarely exercised. A doctor suspected that he died because of heart attack or acute alcohol poisoning.

(Ming Pao 11/01/2013)



A drunk woman in critical condition after jumping off a footbridge

After arguing with her boyfriend on the street early yesterday morning, a drunk woman lost temper, rushed to a footbridge barefoot and jumped from 10 metres onto the road. She was in critical condition.

(The Oriental 09/02/2014)

A 19-year-old teenager found dead after getting drunk

A 19-year-old teenager went to a bar with friends after working overtime. He got drunk and went home in the early morning. Eight hours later, his elder brother found him unconscious in bed, with face and body turning black and showing signs of incontinence. He was later certified dead by ambulance officers. (The Sun 23/10/2012)

2 drunk youths arrested for stealing a minibus and speeding

Two 18-year-old students were alleged to have drunkenly stolen a minibus and speed-driving early yesterday morning. They first hit six taxis parked nearby, drove for 5 km at high speed, and crashed through 5 iron poles and a fire hydrant. They finally stopped after hitting a tree. (Sing Tao Daily 31/12/2011)

A drink-driver with body alcohol content twice the legal limit killed a good teacher

A drink-driver, whose body alcohol content was twice the legal limit, was alleged to have lost control and rammed onto the pavement while overtaking at high speed. A teacher walking to a school nearby was hit by the car and thrown over a few metres. He was certified dead at the scene. The driver was released on bail pending further investigation of drink driving and reckless driving causing death.

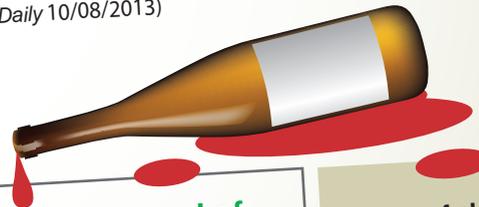
(Hong Kong Economic Times 25/12/2009)



A drunk husband hit his wife with a hammer

A woman, who had 2 jobs to support the family, was suspected to have an extramarital affair by his alcoholic husband. She was hit on the head by his husband with a hammer when she went home, and got a skull fracture.

(Apple Daily 10/08/2013)



4 drunk

teenagers accused of gang-raping a neighbour

Four teenage boys were accused of gang-raping a neighbour who lived near the recycling centre they worked at in Tai Po. They allegedly invited the victim for a drink, escorted her home after she got drunk, and raped her.

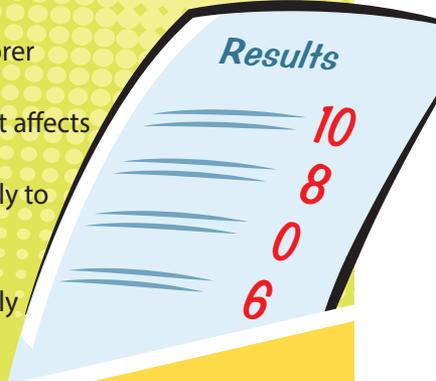
(Ming Pao 23/06/2013)

Effects of alcohol on human body vary from person to person, depending on age, sex, metabolic rate, body size and structure, amount of food in the stomach, speed and amount of drinking, and drug use, etc. In short, it is better not to drink.

Drinking is harmful to youths' brain development

Research shows that:

- Youths with long-term alcohol consumption have poorer memory.
- Alcohol is a toxin against youth's brain development. It affects nervous system development and self-control ability.
- Youths who start drinking before age 12 are more likely to have violent behaviours or injuries later on due to drinking or to skip lessons.
- Youths who start drinking before age 18 are more likely to have alcohol abuse or dependence in adulthood. The risk would be even higher if they started drinking earlier (before age 15).



Excessive drinking can cause death

Binge drinking

- Drinking 5 cans/glasses or more of alcohol at one go.
- Can lead to road traffic accidents, violent behaviours, unsafe sex, alcohol poisoning, etc.
- Research shows that binge-drinking youths have worse academic performance and more risky behaviours against health.





**Mental confusion,
coma**

**Vomiting, seizures,
difficulty breathing**

Bluish skin, pale face

Alcohol poisoning

- When blood alcohol content is too high, the nerves that control breathing, heart beat, body temperature, etc. will stop functioning, causing sudden death.
- Symptoms: mental confusion, coma, vomiting, seizures, difficulty breathing, bluish skin, pale face.



Alcohol can lead to weight

- Each gram of pure alcohol carries 7 kcal but no nutrition value.
- 1 can of beer (330ml) = 142 kcal = 3/4 bowl of rice = 7 sugar cubes
- Also, drunkenness can affect nutrient absorption, leading to deficiency in Vitamins B1, B2, B6, B9, C...

Alcohol-related laws

Restaurants

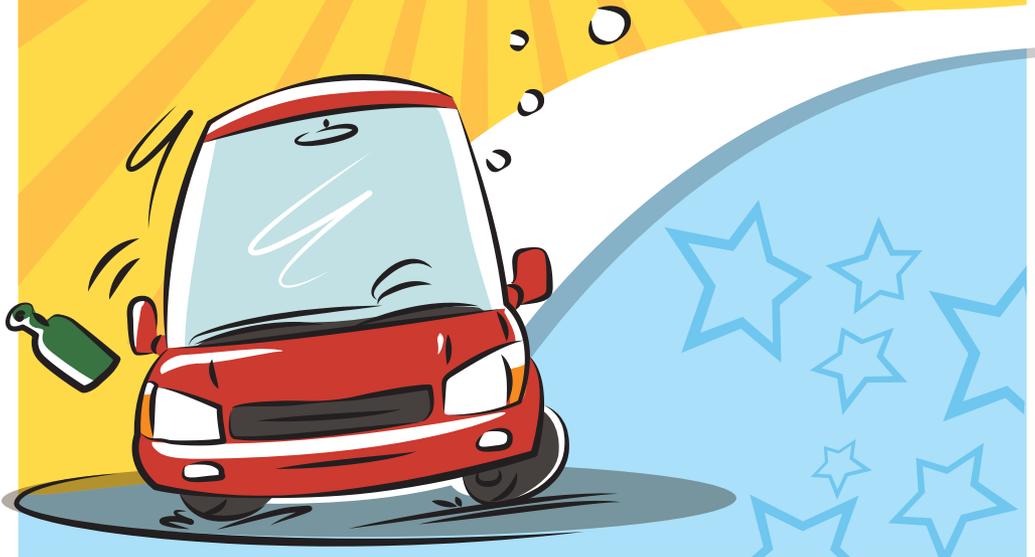
A license is required for selling alcoholic drinks in premises (e.g. restaurants and bars), and licensees should not permit people aged under 18 to drink intoxicating liquor (i.e. alcohol that can make people drunk) in licensed premises.

Drink driving

If a driver's body alcohol content is found exceeding the prescribed limit, he/ she will be prosecuted.



| Prescribed limit | Penalties |
|---|---|
| Every 100 ml blood contains 50 mg of alcohol; or Every 100 ml breath contains 22 µg of alcohol; or Every 100 ml urine contains 67 mg of alcohol | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maximum fine of HK\$25,000 and imprisonment for 3 years;• Mandated to attend a driving improvement course;• Incur 10 driving offence points;• Driving disqualification |



**Alcohol is harmful,
don't drink before you drive**

How much alcohol can you drink before driving?

The alcohol absorption rate varies among people, so there is no general guideline on how much alcohol you can drink without exceeding the prescribed limit. **The safest way is not to drink before driving.**

Say **NO** to alcohol

Build up a correct mindset:
I have the right not to drink,
and this won't affect my
relationship with true friends.

Pick friends with whom
you feel comfortable.

Ask for non-alcoholic
drinks, explain why you
don't drink alcohol or
give an excuse.



Is drinking becoming your problem?

Each question carries 0-4 scores; a total score of ≥ 3 may indicate risky drinking and you may need professional help.

1 How often do you have a drink containing alcohol?

- Never Monthly or less 2-4 times a month 2-3 times a week ≥ 4 times a week
0 score 1 score 2 scores 3 scores 4 scores

2 How many units of alcohol (i.e. 1 can of beer/ 1 cup of wine/ 1 peg of spirits) do you drink on a typical day?

- 0-2 3-4 5-6 7-9 ≥ 10
0 score 1 score 2 scores 3 scores 4 scores

3 How often do you drink at least 5 cans of beer/ 5 cups of wine / 5 pegs of spirits on one occasion?

- Never Less than monthly Monthly Weekly Daily or almost daily
0 score 1 score 2 scores 3 scores 4 scores



Counselling service

1. Tung Wah Group of Hospitals "Stay Sober, Stay Free" Alcohol Addiction Treatment Project
Telephone : 2884 9876
Website : <http://atp.tungwahcsd.org/>
2. Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Integrated Centre for Addiction Prevention and Treatment
Telephone : 2827 1000
Website : <http://icapt.tungwahcsd.org/>
3. Tuen Mun Alcohol Problems Clinic
Telephone : 2456 8260
Website : <http://www3.ha.org.hk/cph/en/services/at.asp>

Relevant information

For more information, please visit "Change 4 Health" website of the Department of Health at www.change4health.gov.hk.



How much alcohol have I consumed?

Find out how many “units of alcohol” you have consumed with the following formula. An “alcohol unit” equals 10 g of pure alcohol.

Number of alcohol unit(s) = Drink volume (ml) x Alcohol content (% by volume) / 1000 x 0.789

| Type | Alcohol content (% by volume)* | Alcohol unit * | Volume per container or per usual serving |
|--|--------------------------------|----------------|---|
|  Beer | 5% | 1 | 330ml (1 can) |
|  Cider | 5% | 1 | 275ml (1 small bottle) |
|  Red wine/ White wine/ Champagne | 12% | 1 | 125ml (small glass) |
|  Plum wine | 15% | 1 | 75ml (1/4 small bottle) |
|  Spirits (e.g. Whisky/ Vodka/ Brandy) | 40% | 1 | 30ml (pub measure) |
|  Chinese spirits/ Baijiu | 52% | 1 | 25ml (0.5 tael) |

Remark: *Approximate values only.

“Responsible drinking” is misleading!

Alcohol industry says:

“Responsible drinking means making an informed and sensible decision about alcohol consumption. This means consumers should not drink when they are **pregnant or underage**, and they **should not drive after drinking**. They also should not engage in excessive drinking and other kinds of alcohol-related activities which can harm them individually or others in society.”



Actually

this is their **promotional tactic**.

They blame drinkers for alcohol-related problems, without mentioning harms of alcohol to the body, e.g. cancers and alcohol addiction.

They are **shedding responsibilities and misleading the public**.