Alcohol at work: what’s the ‘problem’?

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UK Chief Medical Officers recommend that in order to keep the risks from alcohol low:

- Men should not regularly drink more than 3–4 units per day
- Women should not regularly drink more than 2–3 units per day

This is lower risk drinking
How people drink

Abstainers 5.8m
Drinkers at lower risk 24.8m
Drinkers at increasing risk 7.6m

Binge Drinkers 7.7m
Dependent Drinkers 1.1m
Drinkers at higher risk 2.9m

Safe. Sensible. Social. The next steps in the National Alcohol Strategy (DH, 2007) developed by DH analytical team, based on data from the GHS (ONS, 2006)
## Alcohol-related ill health

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>% cases where alcohol is contributory</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oesophageal varices</td>
<td>77%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liver cirrhosis</td>
<td>77%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Epilepsy and status epilepticus</td>
<td>56%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gastro-oesophageal laceration-haemorrhage syndrome</td>
<td>47%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Malignant neoplasm of lip, oral cavity and pharynx</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fire injuries</td>
<td>38%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Cardiac arrythmias</strong></td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intentional self-harm/Event of undetermined intent</td>
<td>34%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Psoriasis</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malignant neoplasm of larynx</td>
<td>34%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hypertensive diseases</strong></td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malignant neoplasm of oesophagus</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spontaneous abortion</td>
<td>NA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Haemorrhagic stroke</td>
<td>31%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Impact on health

- Cardiac arrhythmias: 338,641 (alcohol related: 182,345, non-alcohol: 156,296)
- Hypertensive diseases: 905,379 (alcohol related: 383,869, non-alcohol: 521,510)
Impact on health

Cardiac arrhythmias: 338,641
Hypertensive diseases: 905,379

non alcohol
Impact of alcohol on the workplace

Absenteism

- Unemployment, recruitment & training costs
- Damaged customer relationships

Alcohol-related harm in the workplace

- Accidents & injuries at work
- “Presenteeism” & poor productivity

Low team morale
It’s not all about binge drinking and dependency
In a workforce of 100+ it is likely that:
- 1 in 3 men will be drinking above lower risk levels
- 1 in 6 women will be drinking above lower risk levels

Alcohol costs the wider UK economy up to £6.4 billion per year and every year in England:
- 17.3 million working days are lost due to alcohol
- absenteeism due to alcohol costs employers £1.8 bn
- on average, alcohol harm costs an organisation with 1000 employees at least £190k per year

There are no estimates for the cost to employers from “presenteeism” and alcohol-related poor performance at work
Alcohol Identification and Brief Advice (IBA)

Identification of employees’ risk levels by AUDIT screening tool
5 minutes of brief information about risks
employees make their own decisions based on new awareness
effective in reducing alcohol use in 1 in 8 recipients (very robustly evidence-based)
What can employers do?

- Include alcohol in holistic approach to improving employee health & wellbeing.
- Ensure all employees have a good level of alcohol awareness including:
  - Alcohol units,
  - Recommended guidelines and risks of drinking above these
  - Where to get more help and information
- Staff in appropriate roles trained to deliver IBA
- Managers clear on the importance of preventing alcohol misuse through promoting a healthy workplace.
- A suitable workplace alcohol policy that clearly sets guidelines for managers and staff on a range of alcohol-related areas
- Senior organisational commitment to the alcohol workplace policy and health and wellbeing objectives
Thank You

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