

## **ALCOHOL HARMS YOU!**

### **Drinking Advice to Binge Drinkers**

Binge drinking (also known as 'heavy episodic drinking') is a pattern of heavy drinking when consuming more than 60 grams of pure alcohol on a single occasion. In Hong Kong, 60 grams of pure alcohol is equivalent to approximately 5 cans of beers/ 5 glasses of table wine/ 5 pegs of spirits. One occasion refers to a period of few hours.

Binge drinking can put you at risk of a variety of physical, mental and social harms. This advice helps you to be aware of this drinking advice, which provides both information of some harmful effects of binge drinking and tips to help you cut down alcohol sensibly.

### **Don't let binge drinking ruin your relationship with others. Your behaviour may hurt your beloved ones physically and emotionally!**

- Excessive amount of alcohol consumed at one go increases the immediate risk of alcoholic poisoning, accidental injury, interpersonal violence, road traffic accidents and risk-taking behaviours such as unprotected sex.
- Each additional drink amounts to further increase in risk of harming yourself and others.

### **Protect your liver by drinking less.**

- Heavy drinking can cause inflammation of the liver, which can be reversible if you stop drinking. However, continued alcohol consumption can lead to permanent cirrhosis of the liver, which in turn increases your risk of developing liver cancer.
- International research shows that drinking even 1 drink per day increases your risk of dying from cancer (for example, by 10% for liver cancer) and that the risk increases with the amount you drink<sup>1</sup>.

### **Don't let drinking affect your work performance.**

- You may experience hangover after a night of heavy drinking. Symptoms such as fatigue, headache, muscle aches, thirst, dizziness, cognitive problems and mood disturbances can last up to 24 hours after heavy drinking.
- Binge drinking may therefore impair your work performance, often leading to work absenteeism, low work productivity and poor decision-making.

### **Cut down drinking to reduce your future risk of alcohol use disorders.**

- Long-term binge drinking is associated with a risk of developing alcohol use disorders, which include alcohol abuse and alcohol dependence<sup>2</sup>.
- Alcohol use disorders can lead to a whole range of serious physiological conditions (e.g. liver cirrhosis, stroke and high blood pressure), psychological problems (e.g. depression, anxiety, memory impairment) and social problems (e.g. domestic dispute, child abuse, interpersonal violence and work absenteeism<sup>3</sup>).
- You may experience alcohol withdrawal symptoms if you suddenly stop drinking, and it turns out to be a vicious cycle when you drink again to cope with the condition<sup>3</sup>. To treat alcohol withdrawal syndrome, you may need to take medications, engage in outpatient or even inpatient treatment<sup>4</sup>.

### **Find ways to cut down on alcohol consumption with your drinking partners.**

- Don't pressure your friends to drink and avoid drinking games.
- Make a plan of cutting down on alcohol and tell your family, friends and colleagues to seek their support.
- Don't yield to peer pressure. (Tips for resisting peer pressure: Give an excuse such as 'I feel sick', 'I get drunk easily', 'I have something important to deal with later (or tomorrow)', and 'My family doesn't like me to drink')
- Celebration and social gathering can be great without alcohol. When you choose to drink for social purpose, switch to non-alcoholic beverages.
- If you and your friends often socialise at places that serve alcohol, try alternative activities in different types of places.

### **If you choose to drink, better eat before and while you are drinking.**

- If you choose to drink, eat before and while you are drinking to slow down the absorption of alcohol into your bloodstream.
- Try to wait and have other non-alcoholic drinks with your meal.
- Delay your drinking to the very last moment means you are not drinking the whole evening.

### **Whatever stress you're facing, there are more effective ways to cope with it other than drinking.**

- Exercise - even a brisk walk can help clear your mind.
- A hot bath or some gentle stretches can relieve tension from your body.
- Talk to a trusted friend or colleague and come up some solutions with them.

## Reference

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2. Shield KD, Parry C, Rehm J. (2013) Chronic diseases and conditions related to alcohol use. *Alcohol Res.*, 35, 155–171.
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