



衛生防護中心  
Centre for Health Protection

Healthy Tips

There is no such thing as risk-free drinking. If you drink, do it sensibly. Be aware that people should NOT DRINK AT ALL when or before performing the following activities: driving; handling chemicals, sharps and dangerous goods; operating machinery and equipment; working at heights; taking medicines; participating in active sports or swimming.

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衛生署  
Department of Health

# Non-Communicable Diseases

# Aware

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## Are You Aware That ....

▶ Drink driving not only has legal implications but also dramatically increases the chance of death or serious injury resulting from a motor vehicle accident. According to Traffic Accident Data System of the Road Safety Standards Division, Transport Department, between 2000 and 2003, the number of drivers found to have alcohol consumption and involved in road traffic accidents resulting in person injury was 321. These included 7 drivers involved in fatal accidents where one or more persons died within 30 days of the accident; 101 drivers involved in serious accidents that one or more persons were injured and detained in hospital for more than 12 hours; and 213 drivers involved in slight accidents that one or more persons were injured and detained in hospital for less than 12 hours if required (Table 1).

Table 1: Number of drivers found to have alcohol consumption and involved in road traffic accidents resulting in personal injury by severity of accident, 2000-2003

Severity	2000	2001	2002	2003	Total
Fatal	0	3	1	3	7
Serious	21	25	22	33	101
Slight	53	32	58	70	213
<b>Total</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>321</b>

Source: Transport Department. (Available at: [http://www.info.gov.hk/td/eng/transport/rssd/index\\_e.htm](http://www.info.gov.hk/td/eng/transport/rssd/index_e.htm))

▶ A telephone survey, which was conducted in October 2004 and involved 2 088 local people aged 18-64 years, revealed that of 443 respondents who had driven a vehicle in the past 12 months, 31 (7.0%) reported that they drove within two hours after drinking alcoholic beverages in the past month and 26 (83.9%) of whom were male drivers. Further analyzed by age groups revealed that the proportion of persons driving after drinking was the highest among drivers aged 35-44 (10.0%) (Table 2).

Table 2: Number of persons reported that they had driven a vehicle within two hours after drinking alcoholic beverages, October 2004

Age group	No. of persons having driven a vehicle in the past 12 months	No. (%) of persons having driven a vehicle within 2 hours after drinking in the past month
18-24	46	3 (6.5%)
25-34	121	7 (5.8%)
35-44	150	15 (10.0%)
45-54	95	5 (5.3%)
55-64	31	1 (3.2%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>443</b>	<b>31 (7.0%)</b>

Source: Behavioural Risk Factor Survey, October 2004 (provisional data). Department of Health.

# Drinking Alert

The Christmas and New Year holidays are a good time to catch up with relatives and friends. During such social gatherings, some people may feel like to have a few drinks as they find alcohol relaxing and acting as a social lubricant. However, individuals who consume too much alcohol, either on a single episode or on a regular basis over a period of time, will put their health at risk. Binge drinking, which is defined as the consumption of five or more drinks in a row, is particularly hazardous to health. Excessive drinking can lead to alcohol dependency and cause liver and brain damage and certain cancers (such as cancer of the mouth, pharynx, larynx, oesophagus, colon and rectum). Be aware that many alcohol-related deaths have been attributed to binge drinking.

To monitor the pattern of alcohol use in the community, the Population Health Survey, which interviewed face-to-face over 7 000 local males and females aged 15 and above between September 2003 and May 2004, included questions related to alcohol consumption. As shown in Table 3, the Survey estimated that 4.7% of the Hong Kong population aged 15 and above were ex-drinkers; 23.7% drank alcohol occasionally (drink less than once a week); 9.5% were regular drinkers (drink at least once a week).

The Survey also revealed that among the current drinkers, 14.4% had binge drinking in the past month. Males were more likely than females to have binge drinking (18.5% vs. 7.9%). When analyzed by age, younger age groups (17.7% and 22.5% in the 15-24 and 25-34 age groups respectively) were more likely than their older counterparts (14.1% in persons aged 35-44; 13.8% in persons aged 45-54; and 5.4% in the persons aged 55 and above) to engage in binge drinking.

Table 3: Pattern of alcohol consumption by sex

	Proportion of males	Proportion of females	Total
Non-drinker	46.8%	73.8%	61.6%
Ex-drinker	7.3%	2.5%	4.7%
Drink less than once a week	28.8%	19.5%	23.7%
Drink 1-3 days a week	9.0%	2.1%	5.2%
Drink 4-6 days a week	2.4%	0.8%	1.5%
Drink everyday	5.1%	0.9%	2.8%
Unknown/ Missing	0.6%	0.4%	0.5%

Source: Population Health Survey 2003/04 (provisional data). Department of Health.

## \* \* \* \* \* Calendar Event \* \* \* \* \*

To arouse public interest in taking stair climbing as a form of daily exercise, the Central Health Education Unit of the Centre for Health Protection will launch a "Stair Climbing Programme" at 87 public housing estates in end December 2004. For more information on stair climbing, please call the CHEU Hotline at 2833 0111 or visit the "Stair Climbing To Health" webpage at <<http://stairclimbing.cheu.gov.hk>>.



How much is too much? There is no level of drinking that is risk-free. Factors like existing health condition directly affect how much it is "safe" for an individual to drink.

For healthy men, "low" risk drinking is:

- ◆ no more than 3-4 standard drinks per day;
- ◆ less than 21 standard drinks a week; and
- ◆ at least 2 alcohol-free days per week.

For non-pregnant healthy women, "low" risk drinking is:

- ◆ no more than 1-2 standard drinks a day;
- ◆ less than 14 standard drinks a week; and
- ◆ at least 2 alcohol-free days per week.

Of note that for some, no alcohol is the only risk-free option.

If you drink, here are some sensible drinking tips to avoid drinking too much:

- **Know your drink.** As there is difference in the amount of alcohol content in different types of alcoholic beverages, it is important for drinkers to know how much there is in a standard drink for each type of alcoholic beverages (see Box 1).
- **Pace your drinking** to prevent your blood alcohol level from rising quickly.
- **Do not drink with an empty stomach.** Have food before or while drinking to slow down alcohol absorption.
- **Space your drinks** with a non-alcoholic drink in between.
- **Be prepared to say "no thanks"** to offers for more drinks.
- **Avoid drinking games.**

Box 1: What is a standard drink? A "standard drink" is the measure of alcohol in unit, and one standard drink contains 8-10 grams of alcohol.

Examples of typical standard drink	Volume	Unit (s)
1 cans / small bottle of beer at ~5% ABV	370 ml	1.5
1 serve of table wine at ~12% ABV	100 ml	1
1 small glass of Chinese wine at ~30% ABV (e.g. double-evaporated rice wine)	35 ml	1
1 pub measure of spirits at ~40% ABV (e.g. brandy, whisky, gin or volka)	30 ml	1

Note: The term ABV means "alcohol by volume" or what percentage of the total liquid is actually alcohol.

Drinking should be done responsibly. It is best not to drink at all before or when driving. Similarly, do not let your friends drive if you think they have been drinking. Call a taxi or arrange a designated non-drinking driver for them. Be aware, there is no such thing as risk-free drinking. The best way to celebrate holidays safely is simple – do not drink. If you do drink, drink sensibly.

## \* \* \* \* \* News Bites \* \* \* \* \*

A local hospital-based case-control study, which interviewed 822 cases with colorectal cancer and 926 controls with no history of malignancy between April 1998 to March 2000, reported that current drinking habit was associated with an increased risk of colorectal cancer. Compared to non-drinkers, an increased risk of colorectal cancer was found in current drinkers and those who drank  $\geq 4$  days (current and ex-drinkers) or  $> 4$  units (ever and ex-drinkers) weekly. Moreover, colorectal cancer risk was found to decrease with increasing duration of abstinence from drinking. (Source: Ho JW, Lam TH, et al. Smoking, drinking and colorectal cancer in Hong Kong Chinese: a case-control study. International Journal of Cancer 2004; 109(4): 587-97.)