

Non-Communicable Diseases Watch

January 2018



衛生防護中心
Centre for Health Protection



衛生署
Department of Health

Freed From the Alcohol Trap

Key Messages

- ※ Alcohol is a psychoactive substance with addictive properties. In predisposed individuals, alcohol drinking can lead to alcohol dependence.
- ※ Developed by the World Health Organization, Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT) consists of 10 questions to assess drinkers' alcohol consumption pattern and identify at-risk drinking.
- ※ In Hong Kong, the Population Health Survey 2014/15 found that 3.5% of community-dwelling persons aged 15 and above had an AUDIT total score at 8 or higher in the 12 months preceding the survey, indicating that their drinking pattern was at risk, at harmful levels, or probably having alcohol dependence.
- ※ The Department of Health (DH) urges alcohol drinkers to appreciate the benefits of cutting down on the frequency and quantity of drinking, or preferably stopping drinking alcohol completely. Talk to a doctor if indicated.
- ※ For information about alcohol and health, tips on cutting down or stopping drinking, please visit the Change for Health website of DH at www.change4health.gov.hk.

#酒為下著
#AlcoholFails

Freed from the Alcohol Trap

Alcohol use is one of the biggest preventable causes of premature death. Worldwide, 3.3 million deaths every year result from the harmful use of alcohol.¹ While many people choose to drink, they might not be aware of the harm that alcohol causes to their health. More importantly, some become entrenched in the alcohol trap without realising that they have a drinking problem. In fact, alcohol is a psychoactive substance with addictive properties.¹ In predisposed individuals, alcohol drinking can lead to alcohol dependence. Once people form a drinking habit and become addicted to alcohol, quitting can be difficult.

Screening for Alcohol Use Disorder

Screening generally means examining people for disease or disorder before symptoms appear. Doctors and healthcare professionals usually screen individuals at increased risk for high blood pressure, high blood sugar or high blood cholesterol, all of which help indicate their overall risk for developing cardiovascular diseases in the future. Likewise, alcohol screening aims to assess individuals' drinking pattern to see if it is likely to be harming their health. Research has shown that alcohol screening with brief intervention is effective in reducing excessive alcohol drinking and related harms among drinkers.^{2,3}

The Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT) is a alcohol screening tool developed by the World Health Organization (WHO). The AUDIT consists of 10 questions covering recent alcohol use (questions 1 to 3), alcohol dependence symptoms (questions 4 to 6) and alcohol-related problems (questions 7 to 10) to assess drinkers' alcohol consumption pattern and identify at-risk drinking. The item score of each question ranges

from 0 to 4. The AUDIT score that is the sum of all 10 item scores ranges from 0 to 40, with a higher score indicating a higher risk of harmful drinking. Both a clinician-administered version and a self-report version of the tool are available. The tool also provides a framework for intervention to support at-risk drinkers to reduce or cease alcohol drinking, thereby avoiding harmful consequences of their alcohol use.⁴

To make AUDIT more culturally relevant to the local population, the Department of Health (DH) in collaboration with the Schools of Public Health of the University of Hong Kong and the Chinese University of Hong Kong developed a locally validated version of the AUDIT questionnaire by fine-tuning the wording and adding a pictorial aid (Box 1). Drinkers can answer the Alcohol and Health Questionnaire (AUDIT[#]) to understand their drinking pattern and potential health issues associated with it. For both electronic and printer-friendly versions, please visit <http://change4health.gov.hk/en/audit>. While the questionnaire serves as a useful and handy reference, it cannot replace a full evaluation by healthcare professional, nor can it provide a diagnosis of alcohol dependence or any medical condition. For professional help, please consult family doctor or visit http://www.change4health.gov.hk/en/alcohol_aware/facts/affecting/help/ for more information.



(AUDIT[#] QR Code)

Box 1: Alcohol and Health Questionnaire (AUDIT#)



ALCOHOL AND HEALTH QUESTIONNAIRE (AUDIT#)

Introduction

Because alcohol intake can affect health and interfere with many medications, we want to ask you some questions about your alcohol use. Your answer will remain confidential, so please be as accurate as possible. Please ask for clarification if necessary.

Part A (AUDIT-C) Please circle the answer wherever appropriate.

In the past year...	Scoring system					Your Score
	0	1	2	3	4	
1. How often do you have a drink containing alcohol?	Never	Monthly or less	2 - 4 times per month	2 - 3 times per week	4+ times per week	
2. How many units of alcohol do you drink on a typical day when you are drinking? (With reference to the measurements in the picture below; please add up all types of alcoholic drinks)	0 - 2	3 - 4	5 - 6	7 - 9	10+	
3. How often do you have at least 5 cans of beer/5 glasses of table wine/5 peg of spirits on one occasion? (With reference to the picture below)	Never	Less than monthly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily or almost daily	

SCORE (A): _____

Please continue the questions in Part B if your score is 3 or more

What is an Alcohol Unit?

The number of alcohol units of different types of alcoholic beverages can be calculated using the following formula.

$$1 \text{ Alcohol Unit} = 10 \text{ g Alcohol}$$

$$\text{Number of Units of Alcohol} = \frac{\text{Drink Volume (ml)} \times \text{Alcohol Content (\% by volume)}}{1000} \times 0.789$$

* Alcohol content is printed on the label of the container.

Alcohol Conversion 1 alcohol unit = 10 g pure alcohol

0.7 unit	1.3 units	1.3 units	2.0 units	2.5 units	1.2 units	1.3 units	0.7 unit	5.7 units	0.6 unit	0.8 unit	0.3 unit
1 glass (180ml) Beer / alcopops	1 can (330ml) Beer / alcopops	1 bottle (330ml) Beer / alcopops	1 can (500ml) Beer / alcopops	1 bottle (640ml) Beer / alcopops	1 glass (125ml) Red / White wine / Champagne	1 peg (40-50ml) Spirits	1 shot (22ml) Spirits	1 glass (180ml) Rice wine	1 small glass (20ml) Rice wine	1 maotai glass (20ml) Maotai	1 small cup (20ml) Japanese Sake

Common alcoholic beverages in Hong Kong relatively proportional to scale and their alcohol content (unit).

How to Interpret the Score of AUDIT-C?

0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep it up! No drinking is a healthy start to a healthy life.
1 - 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Try to drink less or abstain for preventing cancer and other diseases. If you drink, limit to 2 alcohol units for men and 1 for women a day. Complete abstinence if you have medical conditions, are taking medications, operating a vehicle or machinery, are pregnant, or are underage.
3 or above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please continue to answer the next 7 questions to find out more information (see overleaf).

Q3 scores ≥ 1 !

You tend to **binge drink** (i.e. consumption of 5 or more alcoholic drinks in a row), which is dangerous and harmful. Try to limit to 2 alcohol units for men and 1 for women a day.

Please continue the questions in Part B if your score is 3 or more

This questionnaire serves as a reference for you to understand your alcohol use and potential health issues associated with it. This questionnaire cannot replace a full evaluation by a healthcare professional, nor can it provide a diagnosis of alcohol dependence or any other medical condition. For professional help, please visit http://www.change4health.gov.hk/en/alcohol_aware/facts/affecting/help/

The Department of Health makes no representation or warranty as to the accuracy, completeness or reliability of the information contained in this questionnaire or the fitness of such information for any particular use.

Box 1: Alcohol and Health Questionnaire (AUDIT[#]) (cont'u)

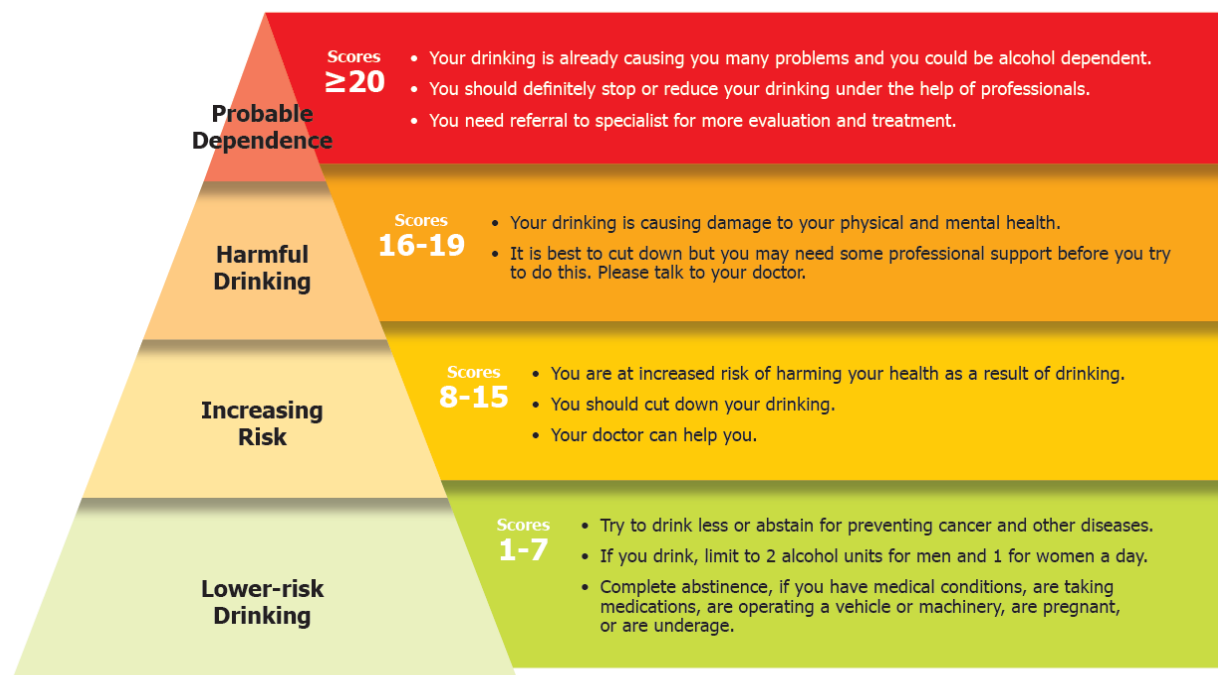
Part B (AUDIT) Please continue to circle the answer wherever appropriate.

(After completing first 3 questions) In the past year...	Scoring system					Your Score
	0	1	2	3	4	
4. How often during the last year have you found that you were not able to stop drinking once you had started?	Never	Less than monthly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily or almost daily	
5. How often during the last year have you failed to do what was normally expected from you because of your drinking?	Never	Less than monthly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily or almost daily	
6. How often during the last year have you needed an alcoholic drink in the morning to get yourself going after a heavy drinking session?	Never	Less than monthly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily or almost daily	
7. How often during the last year have you had a feeling of guilt or remorse after drinking?	Never	Less than monthly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily or almost daily	
8. How often during the last year have you been unable to remember what happened the night before because you had been drinking?	Never	Less than monthly	Monthly	Weekly	Daily or almost daily	
9. Have you or somebody else been injured as a result of your drinking?	No		Yes, but not in the last year		Yes, during the last year	
10. Has a relative or friend, doctor or other health worker been concerned about your drinking or suggested that you cut down?	No		Yes, but not in the last year		Yes, during the last year	

SCORE (B): _____

ADD the score from PART A and get your FINAL SCORE (A+B): _____

How to Interpret the Final Score of AUDIT?



For electronic version for this questionnaire, please visit

<http://change4health.gov.hk/en/audit>



This questionnaire is published by the Department of Health, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region www.change4health.gov.hk

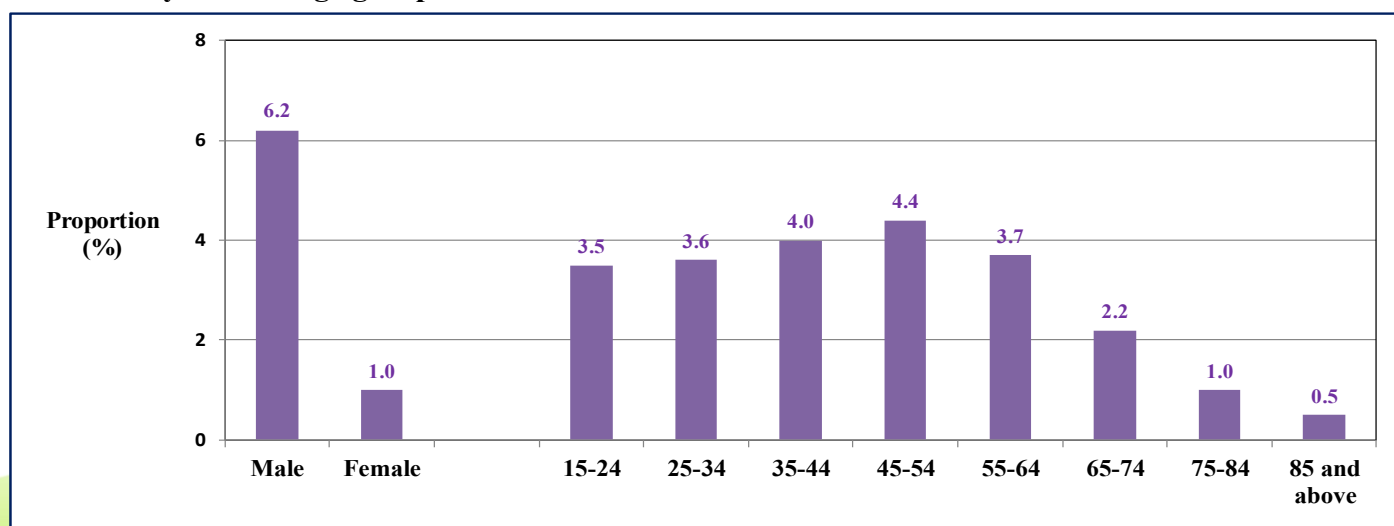
Drinking Patterns among People aged 15 and Above in Hong Kong

DH conducted the Population Health Survey 2014/15 and observed that 11.1% of community-dwelling persons aged 15 years and above drank alcoholic beverages regularly (i.e. at least one day a week) in the 12 months preceding the survey. The proportions of regular drinkers were higher among males (17.3%) than females (5.4%). By age group, the proportions of regular drinkers were highest among people aged 45-54 (13.6%) and relatively lower among people aged 15-24 (4.4%) and those aged 85 and above (3.9%). As regards the AUDIT score, 3.5% of community-dwelling persons aged 15 years and above had an AUDIT total score at 8 or higher in the 12 months preceding the survey, indicating that their drinking pattern was at risk, in the harmful levels, or probably having alcohol dependence. Similarly, males (6.2%) and persons aged 45-54 (4.4%) were more likely to have an AUDIT score of 8 or above (Figure 1).⁵ It is noteworthy that youth drinking is an important public health issue. The effects of alcohol on their brain would predispose them to mental health and neurocognitive problems which can persist into adulthood. Thus, the finding of 3.5% of youth aged 15-24 having an AUDIT total score of 8 or above deserved particular attention.

Your Health or Your Drink?

To cut down or stop drinking completely is a personal choice. However, drinkers should know that alcohol drinking has both immediate and long-term effects on health. In fact, there is no safe level for alcohol drinking. Alcohol drinking is a causal factor in more than 200 diseases and injury conditions (Figure 2). Alcohol has been classified as a Group 1 carcinogen, belonging to the same group as tobacco smoke, asbestos and ionizing radiation, by the International Agency for Research on Cancer of the WHO. As a proven cancer-causing agent, alcohol can cause cancers of mouth, throat, voice box, oesophagus, liver, colorectum, and female breasts. Regular alcohol drinking, even consumed in small amounts, increases the risk of dying of cancer. While evidence on possible heart benefit of alcohol remains controversial, excessive alcohol drinking has definite detrimental effects on blood pressure and is associated with heart failure and stroke.^{1,6} While young people should take responsibility for their own health, everyone in society has a role in shaping young people's attitudes and behaviours towards alcohol use and protecting them from alcohol-related harm.

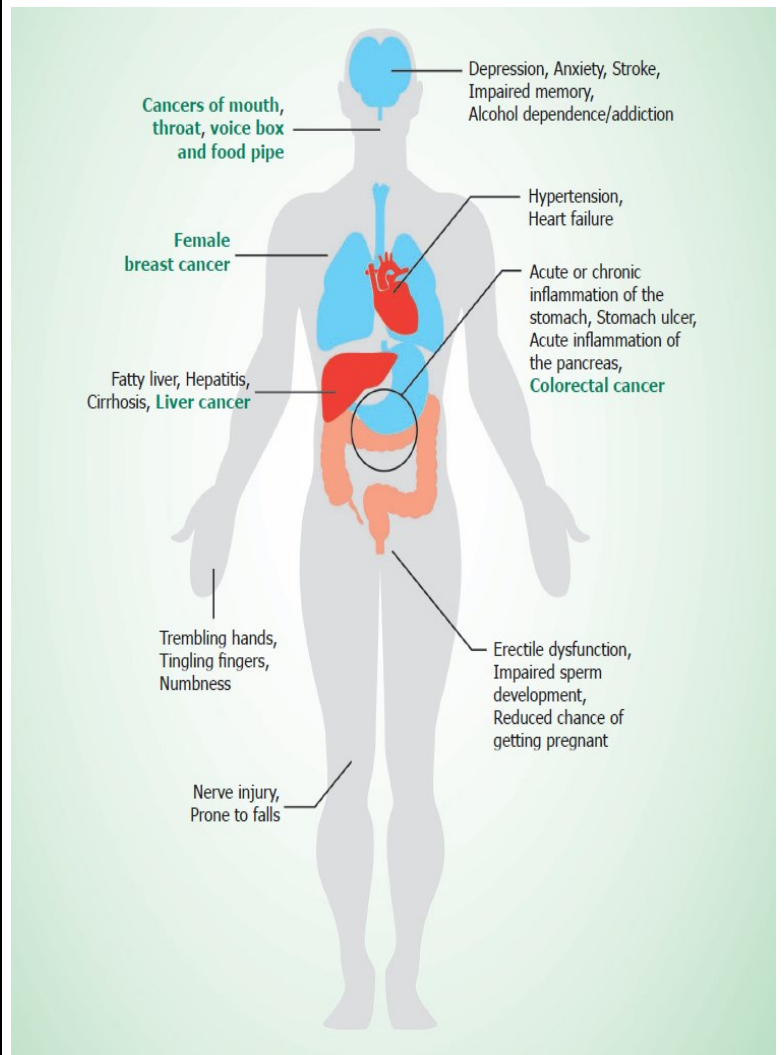
Figure 1: Proportion of community-dwelling persons aged 15 years and above having an AUDIT score 8 or above by sex and age group



Leading a Healthier Alcohol-free Life

DH urges alcohol drinkers to appreciate the benefits of cutting down on the frequency and quantity of drinking (i.e. limit to no more than 2 alcohol units for men a day and no more than 1 alcohol unit for women a day), or preferably that of stopping drinking alcohol completely. Talk to a doctor if indicated. As it is not reasonable to use a cancer-causing agent to improve health, non-drinkers should not start drinking, falsely believing or assuming that alcohol consumption can lift their mood, relieve stress, induce sleep, or boost heart health. To relieve stress, sleep better and keep a strong heart, there are better, safer and more effective means, such as no smoking, active living and healthy eating. To know more about alcohol and health, tips on cutting down or stopping drinking, please visit the Change for Health website of DH at http://www.change4health.gov.hk/en/alcohol_aware/index.html.

Figure 2: Key effects of drinking on the human body⁶



Source: Department of Health

References

1. Fact sheet: Alcohol Geneva: World Health Organization, 2015.
2. Kaner E, Bland M, Cassidy P, et al. Effectiveness of screening and brief alcohol intervention in primary care (SIPS trial): pragmatic cluster randomised controlled trial. *BMJ* 2013; 346:e8501.
3. Tansil KA, Esser MB, Sandhu P, et al. Alcohol Electronic Screening and Brief Intervention: A Community Guide Systematic Review. *Am J Prev Med* 2016; 51(5):801-811.
4. Babor TF, Higgins-Biddle JC, Saunders JB, Monteiro MG. AUDIT. The Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test. Guidelines for Use in Primary Care (Second Edition). Geneva: World Health Organization, 2001.
5. Population Health Survey 2014/15. Hong Kong SAR: Department of Health.
6. Drink or Not Drink? Be Informed if You Drink! Hong Kong SAR: Department of Health, 2016.

World Cancer Day 4 February 2018

World Cancer Day is an initiative of the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) which takes place every year on 4 February. It aims to unite the world's population in the fight against cancer.

Taking place under the tagline “**We Can. I Can.**”, World Cancer Day 2018 calls on everyone — as a collective or as individuals — to take action to reduce the global burden of cancer. Please note, more than one-third of cancers are preventable by adopting a healthy lifestyle!



To know more about World Cancer Day, please visit <http://www.worldcancerday.org/>.
For live updates, follow #WorldCancerDay or #WeCanICan.

Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) WATCH is dedicated to promote public's awareness of and disseminate health information about non-communicable diseases and related issues, and the importance of their prevention and control. It is also an indication of our commitments in responsive risk communication and to address the growing non-communicable disease threats to the health of our community. The Editorial Board welcomes your views and comments. Please send all comments and/or questions to so_dp3@dh.gov.hk.

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