Uncovering Hidden Harms of Alcohol

For Primary Students

Department of Health

Strategy and Action Plan to Prevent and Control NCD in Hong Kong

Sep 2019 Edition
Alcohol (ethanol) is an ingredient in alcoholic drinks. It can lead to loss of self-control, drunkenness (i.e. confusion, unclear speech, loss of balance, dizziness, vomit and so on), or even death due to alcohol poisoning.

How does the body digest alcohol?

Alcohol can be quickly absorbed by the stomach and small bowel. Then, it is carried by the blood to the liver for breakdown. Alcohol that can’t be broken down at once will be carried to other parts of the body, e.g. brain. This will lead to drunkenness or death due to poisoning.

Types of Alcohol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Alcohol content</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beer</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>Approximate values only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red wine/White wine/Champagne</td>
<td>12% 40% 52%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese spirits/Chinese Baijiu</td>
<td>5%0.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirits (e.g. Whisky/Vodka/Brandy)</td>
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<td>Shandy</td>
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Don’t be fooled

Can moderate drinking protect our heart?
It is still not sure whether moderate drinking is good for our heart. Drinking a lot of red wine or other types of alcohol can be harmful, leading to heart disease and cancers. Will you drink a proven toxic substance to protect your heart?

Even a sip once in a while is not good for you!
The human brain does not stop developing up till the early 20s, drinking alcohol at an early age may interfere with healthy brain development. This in turn affects your memory, self-control and academic performance.

What does Red face after drinking mean?
Red face after drinking is due to the deficiency of an enzyme which helps to break down alcohol. It is actually a sign of accumulation of harmful by-products of alcohol.
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What is alcohol?

Alcohol (ethanol) is an ingredient in alcoholic drinks. It can lead to loss of self-control, drunkenness (i.e. confusion, unclear speech, loss of balance, dizziness, vomit and so on), or even death due to alcohol poisoning.

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<td>Alcohol content (% by volume)*</td>
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Primary Students

Harms of alcohol

World Health Organization pointed out:

Lead to about 3,000,000 deaths in the world in 2016!

Lead to over 200 disease and injury conditions

Like tobacco, alcohol is a Group 1 cancer-causing agent and can lead to different cancers

(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 the risk.)

Healthy liver ★ Scarred ★ Liver

Impact of alcohol drinking

- Liver
- Heart
- Pancreas
- Stomach
- Brain

Other serious problems, e.g. drunkenness, family violence, sexual assault, road traffic accidents, etc. Effects of alcohol on body vary from person to person — it's better not to drink.
Harms of alcohol

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Impact of alcohol drinking

Cancers of the oral cavity, throat, voice box and food pipe

Depression, anxiety disorders, stroke, memory loss, alcohol dependence/addiction

High blood pressure, heart failure

Female breast cancer

Acute and chronic inflammation of stomach, stomach ulcer, acute inflammation of pancreas, cancer of the large bowel

Fatty liver, inflammation of liver (hepatitis), “scarring” of liver (cirrhosis), liver cancer

Impotence, low sperm count, reduced chance for women to have a baby

Shaky hands, lack of sensation in fingers, tingling

Nervous system diseases, easy to fall

• Other serious problems, e.g. drunkenness, family violence, sexual assault, road traffic accidents, etc. Effects of alcohol on body vary from person to person — it's better not to drink.
7 ways to say NO to alcohol
Choose appropriate ways under different circumstances

1: Ignore the request
   • Turn a blind eye or a deaf ear to the invitation.

2: Simply say no
   • "No, thanks."

3: Give an excuse
   • "No, I'm allergic to alcohol."
   • "No, drinking harms our health."
   • "No, I've something to do tomorrow."
   • "No, I'm not feeling well today."
   • "No, I don't like the taste of alcohol."

4: Find an ally to back you up
   • "No, we both don't drink."

5: Suggest something else
   • "Alcohol is expensive and unhealthy. Let's drink something else!"

6: Repeat your refusal
   • "I said I don't drink."

7: Walk away from the situation
   • Say: "Sorry, some urgent business suddenly come to mind" or "Sorry, my family is calling me", and walk away quickly.
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Family agreement

Parents

☐ I/We promise not to drink alcohol in front of my/our children.
☐ I/We promise not to allow my/our children to drink alcoholic drinks.
☐ I/We promise not to bring my/our children to wine tasting exhibitions.
☐ I/We promise not to display alcohol prominently at home.
☐ I/We promise to discuss more about alcohol-related problems with my/our children.
☐ I/We promise to ____________________________
☐ I/We promise to ____________________________

Parent signature: ____________________________  Student signature: ____________________________
Date: ____________________________

Students

☐ I promise not to drink alcohol; if someone offers me a drink, I will refuse firmly.
☐ I promise to discuss more about alcohol-related problems with my parents.
☐ I promise to suggest people around me reduce or quit drinking.
☐ I promise to ____________________________.
☐ I promise to ____________________________.

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Counselling service

1. Tung Wah Group of Hospitals “Stay Sober, Stay Free” Alcohol Abuse Prevention and Treatment Service
   Telephone: 2884 9876
   Website: http://atp.tungwahcsd.org/

2. Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Integrated Centre on Addiction Prevention and Treatment
   Telephone: 2827 1000
   Website: http://icapt.tungwahcsd.org/

Relevant information

For more information, please visit “Change for Health” website of the Department of Health at www.change4health.gov.hk.
Uncovering Hidden Harms of Alcohol

For Parents of Primary Students

Department of Health
Sep 2019 Edition
Parents (Primary Students)

Self-reflection for parents

Do you know the harms of alcohol?

Have you ever drunk alcohol in front of your children?

Do you know whether they have drunk alcohol?

Do you know how alcohol affects children?

With whom?

Would they follow suit?

Do you allow your children to drink alcohol?

Why do they drink alcohol?

44% of Grade 4 to 6 students had ever drunk alcohol, half of them first tried alcohol at the age of 8 or younger, but only 20% of parents thought their children had drunk alcohol before.

Source: Survey conducted by School of Public Health, HKU in 2013
Self-reflection for parents

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Do you know the harms of alcohol?

Would they follow suit?

Do you know whether they have drunk alcohol?

Have you ever drunk alcohol in front of your children?

Why do they drink alcohol?

Do you know how alcohol affects children?

How much alcohol?

Which type(s) of alcohol?

With whom?

Parents underestimate their children’s drinking...

44% of Grade 4 to 6 students had ever drunk alcohol, half of them first tried alcohol at the age of 8 or younger, but only 20% of parents thought their children had drunk alcohol before.

Source: Survey conducted by School of Public Health, HKU in 2013
1. Establish good parent-child relationship so that children can share their problems with parents instead of relieving stress through alcohol. Discuss more about alcohol with children to understand their attitudes towards drinking and reduce their curiosity. For example:
   - Symptoms and misbehaviours when drunk.
   - Harms of alcohol to the body, family and society.
   - Let children understand that it is not necessary to do social drinking.
2. Set family rules with children about NO alcohol use and let them know that such rules are for their health.
3. Be aware whether children have friends who smoke, drink or have bad conduct.
4. Don't create an alcohol-friendly family
   - Be a role model and don't drink alcohol in front of your children.
   - Don't allow children to drink alcoholic drinks.
   - Don't allow children to eat food that contains alcohol, including liqueur chocolate and liqueur ice-cream.
   - Don't let children buy alcohol, open bottles or pour wine for you.
   - Don't provide alcohol to your children or display alcohol prominently at home.
   - Don't bring children to wine promotion activities (e.g. wine tasting exhibitions, cocktail making classes, wineries), and pay special attention and avoid exhibitions or promotions that link food with wine.
Tips for parents

4. Don’t create an alcohol-friendly family

• Be a role model and don’t drink alcohol in front of your children.

• Don’t allow children to drink alcoholic drinks.

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