

BIG DRINK DEBATE



Useful Facts and Figures

- The North West is the worst out of the nine English regions for harmful and hazardous drinking;
- Deaths in the North West from alcohol-related causes have doubled in a generation in the North West – 2,200 men and 1,600 women now die every year from an alcohol related disease;
- One person is admitted to hospital in the North West every seven minutes for an alcohol-related condition;
- 71,000 people are admitted to hospital in the North West every year for alcohol related conditions.
- A quarter of adults and children (11-15 year olds) in the North West binge drink;
- More than 73,000 recorded crimes in the North West last year were related to alcohol – of these 50,000 were violent offences.
- The most deprived 20% of our population suffer most from the effects of alcohol.

Young people in the North West

- A quarter of our 11-15 year olds binge drink
- Nearly half (44%) of 14-17 year olds claim to drink at least once a week
- A third of 14-17 year olds binge drink at least once a week.
- Young people are three times as likely to have unprotected sex when drunk, thus putting them at risk of sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancy.
- Of the 44% of North West 14-17 year olds who drink, 12% state they regretted having sex after drinking alcohol.
- Research shows that 40% of sexually active 13-14 year olds are drunk or stoned at first intercourse.

Excessive alcohol use has led to increased:

- street violence
 - domestic violence
 - sexually transmitted disease, unwanted sex and unplanned pregnancy.
- It also causes accidents, death from dangerous driving, poisoning and assaults.

Heavy alcohol consumption has been linked to:

- liver disease
- digestive tract, breast and colon cancers
- stroke
- fertility problems and impotence
- mental health problems.

Definitions

Government recommended sensible **limits**:

- adult men - no more than 3–4 units of alcohol a day;
no more than 21 units of alcohol a week;
- adult women - no more than 2-3 units of alcohol a day;
no more than 14 units of alcohol a week;
- Pregnant women or women trying to get pregnant should not drink alcohol in the first three months and ideally not until after the birth (This is the most recent advice from the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (March 08).

Hazardous drinking for men is 22- 50 units per week and for women it is 15-35 units.

Binge drinking is currently defined as men who consume at least eight, and women at least six standard units of alcohol in a single day. That's double the maximum recommended safe limit for men and women respectively. It has immediate and short-term risks to the drinker and to those around them.

Harmful drinking – this is the most dangerous level of drinking

- Drinking at levels this lead to significant harm to physical and mental health and at levels that may be causing substantial harm to others.
- Women who regularly drink over 6 units a day (or over 35 units a week)
- Men who regularly drink over 8 units a day (or over 50 units a week)

Units in typical drinks

- 1 pint strong lager (5%) is 3 units
- 1 bottle of alcopops is 1.5 units
- 1 standard glass of wine (175ml/12%) is 2 units
- 1 measure spirit (25ml) is 1 unit.

For Info -

Q. Why should people fill in the questionnaire, what will the NHS do with it?

A. Each question – as well as your comments -- will provide us with invaluable information about what people in the North West think about alcohol and its effects. This will help us plan action to reduce harmful drinking that fits with what the people of the North West think and want.

For example people's views on what triggers them to drink more or less will help us to understand what actions might help persuade people to drink at safer levels. Triggers for drinking too much can range from work or relationship stress to having a baby, but everyone is different, so we need as many responses as possible.

Q. Why isn't this excessive drinking a problem in other countries?

A. We aren't the only country with a problem, and we are increasingly seeing reports from other countries about a rise in binge drinking.