

# The Chief Medical Officer's proposed new alcohol guidelines



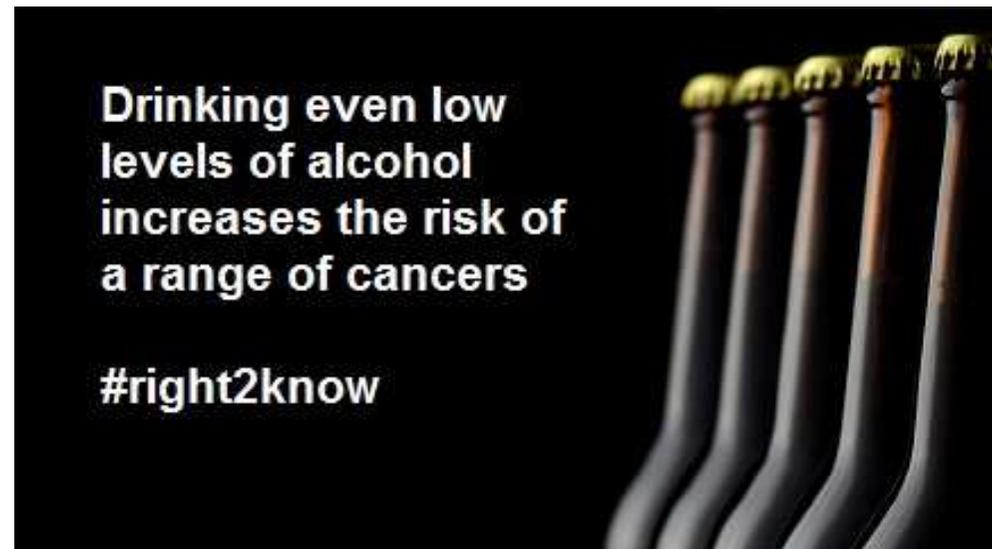
Professor Dame Sally Davies

Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
20<sup>th</sup> January 2016

Dominic Harrison Director of Public Health

## The Chief Medical Officer's new alcohol guidelines state:

- People have a right to accurate information and clear advice about alcohol and its health risks
- There is a responsibility on the Government to ensure this information is provided for citizens in an open way, so they can make informed choices.



## The Chief Medical Officer's evidence-based guidelines recommend:

- A new weekly guideline of no more than 14 units a week
  - The same levels for men and women

*To keep health risks from drinking alcohol to a low level*



## The evidence-based guidelines also recommend:

- Alcohol **free days**
- If you do drink as many as 14 units per week (the equivalent of 6 pints of 4% beer, 6 x175ml glasses 13% wine or half a bottle of whisky)

It is best to **spread this drinking over three days or more**

***If you have one or two heavy drinking sessions per week, you increase your risks of death from long term illnesses, accidents and injuries.***



## New Government Alcohol Guidelines

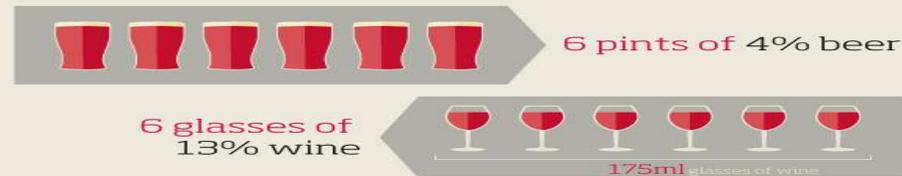
What's changing?

Drinkaware explains



**Unit guidelines** are now the **SAME** for men & women. **BOTH** are advised **not to regularly drink** more than **14 units a week**

This is what 14 units looks like:



**BUT** don't 'save up' your 14 units, it's best to **spread evenly** across the **week** & have **regular drink-free days**



Note: 175ml 13% ABV wine and 4% ABV beer

If you're **pregnant** you **shouldn't** **drink alcohol at all**



Keep the short-term health risks low by:

- **limiting** the total amount of **alcohol** in **one session**
- **drinking** more **slowly**, alternating with **food** and/or **water**

The **new guidelines** have been set at a level to keep the **risk of cancers** or other diseases **low**.

drinkaware



## The Chief Medical Officer's evidence-based guidelines recommend:

- No alcohol consumption during pregnancy

***Women who are pregnant, or planning a pregnancy should be advised that the safest approach is not to drink alcohol at all***



- There is no justification for recommending drinking on health grounds
  - Nor for starting drinking for health reasons
- Evidence shows increasing risk of harm, morbidity and mortality, from any levels of consumption of alcohol



***Alcohol is not good for you or the body, the significant evidence of the effects of alcohol harm on health was not available at the time of the last review (20 years ago)***

## Key messages

Taking into account the acute and chronic risks to health from drinking, even at low levels, the Chief Medical Officer communicates clearly that:

- There is **no such thing** as ‘a safe level’
- The **risk of a developing a range of cancers** (for example of the mouth, throat and breast) increases directly in line with consumption of any amount of alcohol



## Comparing cancer risks for drinking within the alcohol guidelines with risks for higher levels of drinking

Alcohol-related cancers	Lifetime risk of disease from this cause for non-drinkers	Relative risk if drinking within new guidelines (1to14u); increase by	New lifetime risk if drinking within new guidelines (if non-drinker risk is lower than general population risk)	Relative risk if drinking around double the new guidelines (14-35u per week); increase by	New lifetime risk if drinking at 14-35u per week (if non-drinker risk is lower than general population risk)	Relative risk for harmful drinkers (>35u per week); increase by	New lifetime risk if drinking at >35u per week (if non-drinker risk is lower than general population risk)
Female breast	10.90%	1.16	12.64%	1.4	15.26%	1.89	20.60%
Oesophagus (men)	0.60%	2.12	1.27%	4.12	2.47%	9.62	5.77%
Oesophagus (women)	0.40%	2.12	0.85%	4.12	1.65%	9.62	3.85%
Oral (lip, oral cavity, pharynx) (Men)	0.60%	1.49	0.89%	2.54	1.52%	6.13	3.68%
Oral (lip, oral cavity, pharynx) (Women)	0.40%	1.49	0.60%	2.54	1.02%	6.13	2.45%
Bowel (colo-rectal) (Men)	6.40%	1	6.40%	1.32	8.45%	1.79	11.46%
Bowel (colo-rectal) (Women)	5.10%	1	5.10%	1.32	6.73%	1.79	9.13%
Liver (Men)	0.80%	1	0.80%	1.32	1.06%	1.79	1.43%
Liver (Women)	0.49%	1	0.49%	1.32	0.65%	1.79	0.88%



## Putting this into context:

### Female breast cancer

- Non-drinkers, 109 women in every 1000 at risk
- Within the weekly guideline, 126 women in every 1000 at risk
- Drinking between 14-35 u/wk, 153 women in every 1000 at risk
- Drinking over 35 u/wk, 206 women in every 1000 at risk

### Bowel Cancer (Men)

- Non-drinkers, 64 men in every 1000 at risk
- Within the weekly guideline, 64 men in every 1000 at risk
- Drinking between 14-35 u/wk, 85 men in every 1000 at risk
- Drinking over 35 u/wk, 115 men in every 1000 at risk

### Oesophageal Cancer (Men)

- Non-drinkers, 6 men in every 1000 at risk
- Within the weekly guideline, 13 men in every 1000 at risk
- Drinking between 14-35 u/wk, 25 men in every 1000 at risk
- Drinking over 35 u/wk, 58 men in every 1000 at risk

### Liver Cancer (Men)

- Non-drinkers, 8 men in every 1000 at risk
- Within the weekly guideline, 8 men in every 1000 at risk
- Drinking between 14-35 u/wk, 11 men in every 1000 at risk
- Drinking over 35 u/wk, 14 men in every 1000 at risk



## ***The Consultation: ‘How to keep health risks from alcohol to a low level’***

***The Chief Medical Officer would like to know whether you think the recommendations, and the reasons behind them, are clear and easy to understand?*** “We are trying to make sure that the new guidelines are as practical and useful as possible”

### ***How we will take this forward in Blackburn with Darwen:***

- **Raise awareness** of the new guidelines via our commissioned service and key partners
- Work closely with our **communications team** to promote the links to the consultation questionnaire using a range of media platforms
- Engage with a range of **key stakeholders** including the members of the Expert Reference Group, the Alcohol Enquiry / Citizens Jury, CCG etc

***“How to keep health risks from drinking alcohol to a low level: public consultation on proposed new guidelines”***

**Consultation link: (Closing Date 1st April 2016)**

<https://consultations.dh.gov.uk/alcohol/uk-cmo-guidelines-review>

***“UK Chief Medical Officers’ Alcohol Guidelines Review Summary of the proposed new guidelines”***

**Summary of Proposed New Guidelines link:**

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachm ent\\_data/file/489795/summary.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachm ent_data/file/489795/summary.pdf)

***“Alcohol Guidelines Review – Report from the Guidelines development group to the UK Chief Medical Officers”***

**Link to full Report:**

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachm ent\\_data/file/489797/CMO\\_Alcohol\\_Report.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachm ent_data/file/489797/CMO_Alcohol_Report.pdf)

