



Health

SNAPSHOT

2017



# Reducing alcohol-related harm snapshot

Alcohol continues to be one of the major causes of preventable disease in Australia.<sup>1</sup>

Drinking alcohol is associated with a risk of developing health problems such as mental and behavioural disorders, liver cirrhosis, some cancers and cardiovascular diseases, as well as injuries resulting from violence and road accidents.<sup>2</sup>

Excessive alcohol consumption not only affects the drinker's health but can also impact on those around them. More than 1 in 5 (22%) Australians aged 14 and over had been a victim of an alcohol-related incident in 2016.<sup>3</sup>

There is a clear link between the amount of alcohol consumed, either in the short- or long-term, and the level of harm that results.<sup>4</sup>

The health impacts from alcohol vary for different age groups and include:

- drinking during pregnancy can result in congenital abnormalities and disability
- underage drinking can affect normal development of the brain
- young people, up to the age of 25, are at higher risk of alcohol related harm, particularly due to a greater risk of accident and injury
- older people can be more vulnerable to the effects of alcohol due to physiological changes associated with ageing.

## GOAL: to reduce alcohol-related harm in NSW

### Priorities:

- provide information, education and referrals to improve awareness around alcohol and help people make healthy choices
- deliver prevention, early intervention programs and pathways to care to minimise the impact of alcohol on the community, particularly for those at risk of harm
- enhance harm reduction efforts to lessen the burden of disease on individuals and the health system
- provide support for families and carers to help them manage the impact of alcohol on the family and support those in need
- support whole of government priorities to enhance prevention and reduce harms from alcohol

## Current situation

Young people are initiating drinking later. However, about



of high school students reported that they had ever had an alcoholic drink.<sup>5</sup>

30% of adults drink at levels that increase their long-term risk of harm.<sup>6\*</sup>



Aboriginal people are equally likely to abstain from drinking alcohol as non-Aboriginal people.

Among those who do drink a higher proportion drink at levels that place their long-term health at risk.<sup>6</sup>

\*Alcohol consumption at levels that pose a long-term health risk has been in decline in NSW over the last 10 years. However, between 2015 and 2016 there has been an increase; further years of data will be required to determine if this increase is due to random fluctuation or a change in the trend.

# Key programs and status

PRIORITIES	PROGRAMS	PROGRESS
Provide information, education and referrals to improve literacy around alcohol and help people make healthy choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Alcohol and other drugs education within schools.</li> <li>- NSW State Library provides information at over 367 local libraries.</li> <li>- The Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS) is a 24 hour-a-day telephone information, support and referral service.</li> </ul>	<p>Life Education NSW delivers curriculum based alcohol and other drug health lessons that empower children to make healthy lifestyle choices. In 2015-16, Life Education NSW visited 1,734 schools and reached 260,412 children.</p> <p>Drug Info is a partnership between the NSW Ministry of Health and the State Library of NSW. 102 standard drink educational pouring and display kits have been distributed to central public libraries since 2014 and the website received over 264,000 visits in 2016.</p> <p>ADIS receive approximately 26,000 calls a year, with the majority of calls (33%) being related to alcohol.</p>
Deliver prevention, early intervention programs and pathways to care to minimise the impact of alcohol on the community, particularly for those at risk of harm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community Drug Action Teams (CDATs) deliver education, information and skills building in local communities.</li> <li>- Stay Strong It's Worth It, raises awareness among Aboriginal women and their partners, of the risks of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD), providing access to early intervention and treatment services and programs.</li> <li>- The Get Healthy Information and Coaching Service's Alcohol Reduction Program provides motivation and support to make healthy choices in relation to reducing alcohol intake.</li> </ul>	<p>In 2016 70 CDATs delivered alcohol prevention and harm reduction messages across the State.</p> <p>Over 31,000 Stay Strong FASD awareness resources have been distributed and seven community forums held across NSW.</p> <p>Since its launch in 2016, 36 participants have engaged in the Alcohol Reduction Program. This program will be enhanced in September 2017 to support pregnant women to reduce consumption to low levels of risk.</p>
Enhance harm reduction efforts to lessen the burden of disease on individuals and the health system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Alcohol Harm Reduction Plan includes key actions to raise awareness and knowledge of alcohol-related harms, alcohol guidelines and standard drink sizes.</li> <li>- Increase self-identification of alcohol consumption status and self-management through the Your Room Risk Assessment Tools.</li> <li>- Community mobilisation to identify local priorities and solutions.</li> </ul>	<p>The 'Know your standards' standard drinks interactive tool and the Alcohol Risk Assessment tool were launched as part of the yourroom.com.au website redevelopment.</p> <p>NSW Health is working with the ADF to develop an on-line 'Toolkit' for CDATs to help build the capacity of CDATs to respond to liquor license applications. It is anticipated that the toolkit will be completed in late 2017.</p>
Provide support for families and carers to help them manage the impact of alcohol on the family and support those in need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Family Drug Support provides telephone support to families in crisis 24 hours a day.</li> <li>- Strengthen and increase families awareness of treatment and support services.</li> </ul>	<p>Family Drug Support continues to respond to over 20,000 calls a year. Over 16% of those calls were related to alcohol and more than 15% were from rural/regional NSW.</p> <p>The Ministry is developing an alcohol and other drug service directory and list of resources for families and carers which will be available on the yourroom website.</p>
Support whole of Government priorities to enhance prevention and reduce harms from alcohol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Contribute to NSW liquor licence applications.</li> <li>- Contribute to Safe and Vibrant Cities and Central Business District Management of Entertainment Precincts.</li> </ul>	<p>The NSW Ministry of Health has developed a tool to support Local District Health services to comment on liquor licence applications.</p> <p>In 2016, NSW Health was notified of approximately 200 applications.</p>

28%



of adults drink more than four standards drinks on a single occasion in the last four weeks, which placed them at a higher immediate risk of harm.<sup>6\*</sup>

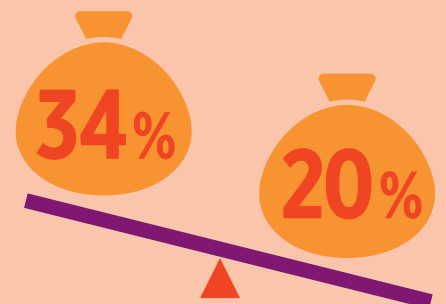
Older people are most likely to drink daily

1 in 6

people aged 65 years or over drink alcohol daily.<sup>6</sup>



Socioeconomically advantaged people are more likely to drink at levels posing immediate risk of harm than least advantaged people.<sup>7</sup>



## Long-term health effects of alcohol misuse

### Mental health

- Dependence
- Depression
- Anxiety

### Brain

- Cognitive impairment

### Cardiovascular

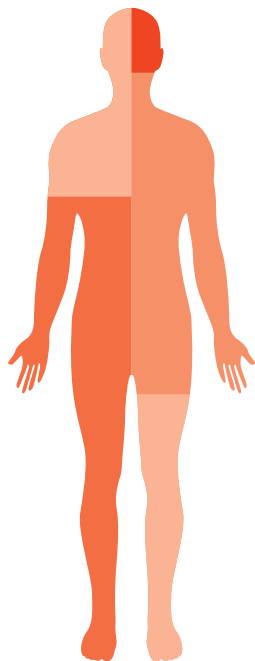
- High blood pressure
- Arrhythmia
- Cardiomyopathy

### Liver

- Cirrhosis
- Hepatitis

### Cancer

- Mouth
- Throat
- Oesophagus
- Liver
- Colorectal
- Breast









# Guidelines and standard drink sizes

## National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines 2009

1. For healthy men and women, drinking no more than 2 standard drinks on any day reduces the lifetime risk of harm from alcohol-related disease or injury.
2. For healthy men and women, drinking no more than 4 standard drinks on a single occasion reduces the risk of alcohol-related injury arising from that occasion.
3.
  - a. Parents and carers are advised that children under 15 years of age are at the greatest risk of harm from drinking and that for this age group, not drinking alcohol is especially important.
  - b. For young people aged 15–17 years, the safest option is to delay the initiation of drinking for as long as possible.
4.
  - a. For women who are pregnant or planning a pregnancy, not drinking is the safest option.
  - b. For women who are breastfeeding, not drinking is the safest option.

Source: National Health and Medical Research Council. *Australian guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia. 2009.<sup>5</sup>

## What is a standard drink?

Beer			Wine		Spirits
Full strength	Mid-strength	Light	Red/White	Sparkling	Shot
					
4.6% Alc/Vol	3.5% Alc/Vol	2.7% Alc/Vol	12.6% Alc/Vol	12.6% Alc/Vol	40% Alc/Vol
285ml	375ml	425ml	100ml	100ml	30ml
1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0

## References

- 1 AIHW 2016. Australian Burden of Disease Study: impact and causes of illness and death in Australia 2011. Australian Burden of Disease Study series no. 3. Cat. no. BOD 4. Canberra: AIHW.
- 2 World Health Organisation. Alcohol. Fact sheet; 2015.
- 3 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2017, 2016 *National Drug Strategy Household Survey*.
- 4 The Royal Australasian College of Physicians and the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists. 2016 Alcohol Policy.
- 5 NSW Health 2016. *Trends in alcohol use and health related harms in NSW: Report of the Chief Health Officer 2016*.
- 6 NSW Health, 2016 NSW Population Health Survey.
- 7 NSW Health Stats - Alcohol consumption at levels posing immediate risk to health by socioeconomic status and sex, persons aged 16 years and over, NSW 2016.

For more information contact:  
**Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS) NSW on (02) 9361 8000 (Sydney metro) or 1800 422 599 (outside Sydney metro and interstate)**

**Family Drug Support on 1300 368 186**

**Visit Your Room website at: [www.yourroom.com.au](http://www.yourroom.com.au)**

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