



邁 TOWARDS
向 2025

香港非傳染病防控策略及行動計劃
Strategy and Action Plan to
Prevent and Control NCD in Hong Kong

For Secondary
Students

Uncovering Hidden Harms of Alcohol



#年少無酒
#YoungAndAlcoholFree



衛生署
Department of Health

Feb 2021 Edition

Don't be deceived

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. Besides, alcohol will **put on weight!**

Can "moderate" drinking protect our heart?

It's still debatable whether moderate drinking is good for our heart. Drinking too much red wine or other alcoholic drinks can be however harmful and **lead to heart disease and cancers**.

Is it worthwhile to drink a proven toxic substance for heart protection?

What does red face after drinking mean?

The alcohol flushing response is due to the deficiency of an enzyme (acetaldehyde dehydrogenase) which helps to break down alcohol. It is actually a sign of accumulation of harmful by-products of alcohol. Besides, scientific research has not found effective ways to counteract alcohol and its hangover effects.

Can alcohol relieve stress?

Alcohol stimulates hormone release by the hypothalamus, a part of the brain which influences emotions, and induces stress response. This creates a vicious cycle. The more stressful you are, the more you drink, possibly leading to alcoholism.

Harms of alcohol

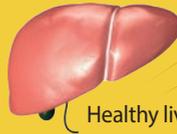
World Health Organization pointed out:

Lead to about

3,000,000

deaths worldwide in 2016!

Lead to over **200** disease and injury conditions, e.g. alcohol dependence, mental illness, cirrhosis, hepatitis, stroke, heart disease, cancers...



Healthy liver



"Scarred" liver

- Like tobacco, alcohol is classified as a **Group 1 cancer-causing agent** and can lead to cancers of the oral cavity, throat, voice box, food pipe, liver, large bowel and female breasts.
- 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.

Also leads to other serious problems, e.g. drunkenness, family violence, sexual assault and road traffic accidents...
In Hong Kong,

- 2,517 people were admitted to hospitals in 2018 due to alcohol use.
- 49 drink-driving accidents happened in 2019.

A young adult died after drinking whisky mixed with green tea

A 24-year-old man fell comatose on the way home in a taxi after gathering with friends in a bar in Mongkok. He was suspected to have drunk a large amount of "black label whisky mixed with green tea". He was then sent to hospital but certified dead on arrival. He had smoking and drinking habits and rarely exercised. A doctor suspected that he died because of heart attack or acute alcohol poisoning.
(Ming Pao 11/01/2013)



A 19-year-old teenager found dead after getting drunk

A 19-year-old teenager went to a bar with friends after working overtime. He got drunk and went home in the early morning. Eight hours later, his elder brother found him unconscious in bed, with face and body turning black and showing signs of incontinence. He was later certified dead by ambulance officers. (The Sun 23/10/2012)

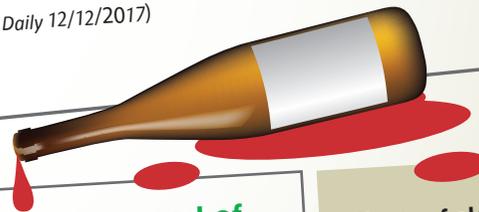
2 drunk youths arrested for stealing a minibus and speeding

Two 18-year-old students were alleged to have drunkenly stolen a minibus and speed-driving early yesterday morning. They first hit six taxis parked nearby, drove for 5 km at high speed, and crashed through 5 iron poles and a fire hydrant. They finally stopped after hitting a tree. (Sing Tao Daily 31/12/2011)

Young woman drowned at alcohol-fuelled pool party

Three years ago, a 21-year-old woman who attended an evening pool party was found unconscious at the bottom of the pool when the party ended. She died a day later in hospital. The Coroner's Court heard that free-flowing alcohol at no charge was offered at the event. The doctor giving evidence in the court stated that the victim had a high blood-alcohol level.

(Apple Daily 12/12/2017)



A drunk woman in critical condition after jumping off a footbridge

After arguing with her boyfriend on the street early yesterday morning, a drunk woman lost temper, rushed to a footbridge barefoot and jumped from 10 metres onto the road. She was in critical condition.
(The Oriental 09/02/2014)

4 drunk

teenagers accused of gang-raping a neighbour

Four teenage boys were accused of gang-raping a neighbour who lived near the recycling centre they worked at in Tai Po. They allegedly invited the victim for a drink, escorted her home after she got drunk, and raped her.
(Ming Pao 23/06/2013)



Effects of alcohol on human body vary from person to person, depending on age, sex, metabolic rate, body size and structure, amount of food in the stomach, speed and amount of drinking, and drug use, etc. In short, it is better not to drink.



Drinking is harmful to youths' brain development

Research shows that:

- Youths with long-term alcohol consumption have poorer memory.
- Alcohol is a toxin against youth brain development. It affects nervous system development and self-control ability.
- Youths who start drinking before age 12 are more likely to have violent behaviours or injuries later on due to drinking or to skip lessons.
- Youths who start drinking before age 18 are more likely to develop alcohol abuse or dependence in adulthood. The risk would be even higher if they started drinking earlier (before age 15).



Excessive drinking can cause death

Binge drinking

- Drinking 5 cans/glasses or more of alcohol at one go.
- Can lead to road traffic accidents, violent behaviours, unsafe sex, alcohol poisoning, etc.
- Research shows that binge-drinking youths have worse academic performance and more risky behaviours against health.

Alcohol poisoning

- When blood alcohol content is too high, the nerves that control breathing, heart beat, body temperature, etc. will stop functioning, causing sudden death.
- Symptoms: mental confusion, vomiting, seizures, breathing difficulty, blue-tinged or pale skin, coma.



Alcohol can lead to weight gain

- Each gram of pure alcohol carries 7 kcal but no nutrition value.
- 1 can of beer (330ml) = 142 kcal = 3/4 bowl of rice = 7 sugar cubes
- Also, drunkenness can affect nutrient absorption, leading to deficiency in Vitamins B1, B2, B6, B9, C...

Say **NO** to alcohol!

1. Avoid friends' temptation to try smoking or drinking.
2. Avoid taking part in activities that provide alcohol.
3. On the occasions of celebration or gathering, choose non-alcoholic drinks, e.g. water, sugar-free beverages, etc.

Choose appropriate ways under different circumstances 7 ways to say **NO** to alcohol

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."
- "No, drinking makes people fat."





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 have something else!”

6: Repeat your refusal

- “I said I don’t drink.”



7: Walk away from the situation

- Say: “Sorry, some urgent business has flashed through my mind” or “Sorry, my family is calling me” and walk away quickly.

Alcohol cannot help solve problems. Instead, it has a lot of bad effects. Try to talk with parents, friends or other trustworthy people and find solutions together when you have problems.

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 promise not to ask my/ our children to buy alcohol, open alcohol bottles or pour alcohol for us.
- 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 : _____

Date : _____

Students

- I promise not to drink alcohol; if someone offers me a drink, I will refuse firmly.
- I promise to avoid attending activities which provides alcohol.
- I promise not to buy alcohol, open bottles or pour alcohol for others.
- I promise to discuss more about alcohol-related problems with my parents.
- I promise to advise people around me to reduce or quit drinking.
- I/We promise to _____.
- I/We promise to _____.

Student signature : _____

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.





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Self-reflection for parents

Do you know the harms of alcohol?

Do you know whether they have drunk alcohol?

Have you ever drunk alcohol in front of your children?

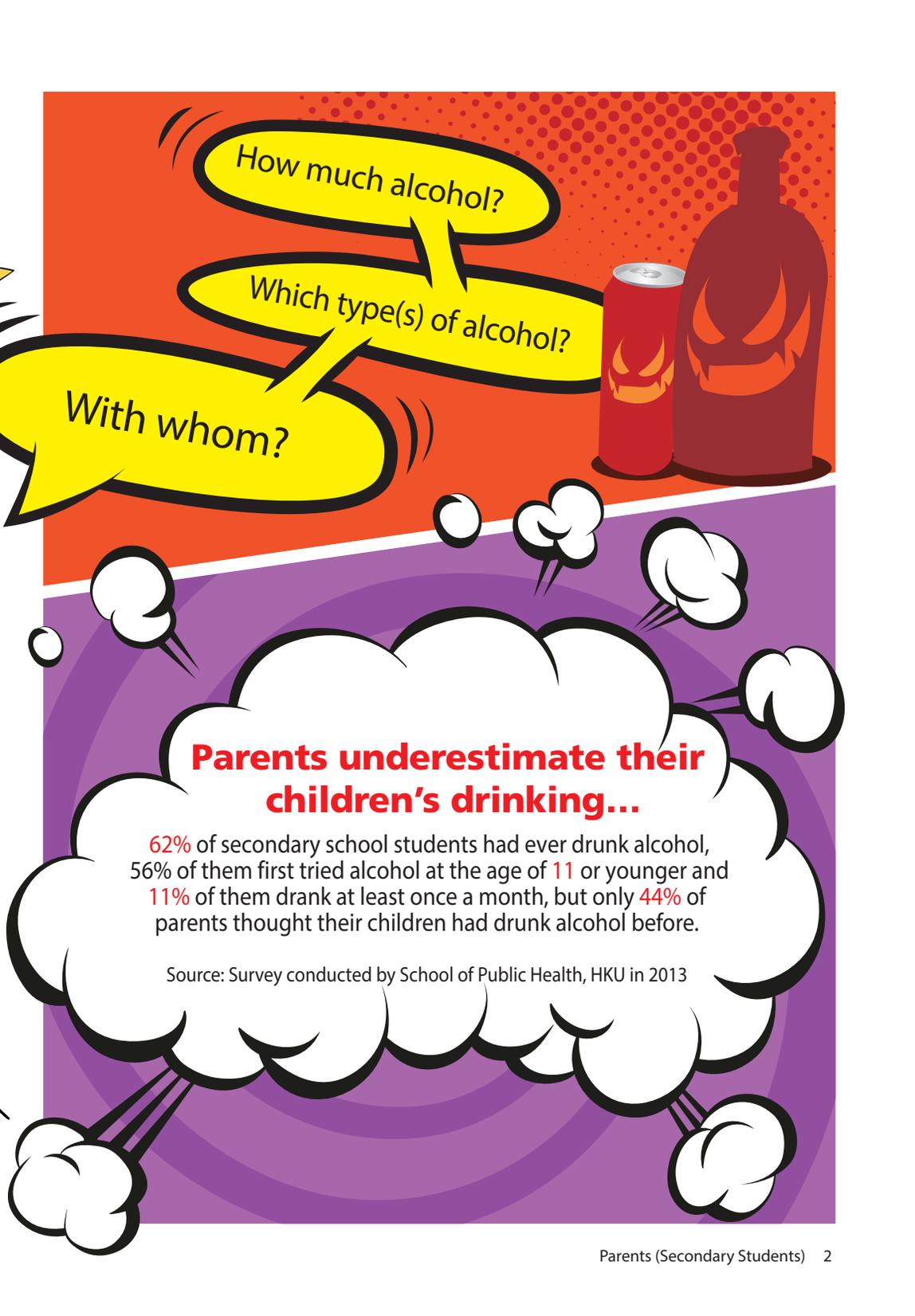
Do you know how alcohol affects children?



Do you allow your children to drink alcohol?

Why do they drink alcohol?

Would they follow suit?



How much alcohol?

Which type(s) of alcohol?

With whom?

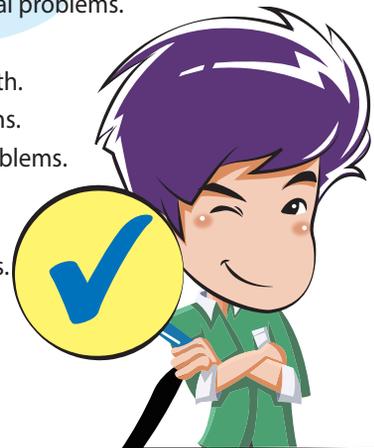
Parents underestimate their children's drinking...

62% of secondary school students had ever drunk alcohol, 56% of them first tried alcohol at the age of 11 or younger and 11% of them drank at least once a month, but only 44% of parents thought their children had drunk alcohol before.

Source: Survey conducted by School of Public Health, HKU in 2013

Tips for parents

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. Be aware whether children have the following symptoms:
 - Academic or behavioural problems.
 - Changed social circle.
 - Alcoholic smell on breath.
 - Flushing without reasons.
 - Motor coordination problems.
 - Unclear speech.
 - Memory or concentration problems.



5. 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.



How much alcohol have I consumed?

Find out how many “units of alcohol” you have consumed with the following formula. An “alcohol unit” equals 10 g of pure alcohol.

Number of alcohol unit(s) = Drink volume (ml) x Alcohol content (% by volume) / 1000 x 0.789

Type	Alcohol content (% by volume)*	Alcohol unit *	Volume per container or per usual serving
 Beer	5%	1	330ml (1 can)
 Cider	5%	1	275ml (1 small bottle)
 Red wine/ White wine/ Champagne	12%	1	125ml (small glass)
 Plum wine	15%	1	75ml (1/4 small bottle)
 Spirits (e.g. Whisky/ Vodka/ Brandy)	40%	1	30ml (pub measure)
 Chinese spirits/ Chinese Baijiu	52%	1	25ml (0.5 tael)

Remark: *Approximate values only.

“Responsible drinking” is misleading!

Alcohol industry says:

“Responsible drinking means making an informed and sensible decision about alcohol consumption. This means consumers should not drink when they are **pregnant or underage**, and they **should not drive after drinking**. They also should not engage in excessive drinking and other kinds of alcohol-related activities which can harm them individually or others in society.”



Actually ...

this is their **promotional tactic**. They blame drinkers for alcohol-related problems, without mentioning harms of alcohol to the body, e.g. cancers and alcohol addiction. They are **shedding responsibilities and misleading the public**.



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