



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 Young  
People

# Uncovering Hidden Harms of Alcohol



#年少無酒  
#YoungAndAlcoholFree



衛生署  
Department of Health

Oct 2024 Edition

# Don't be deceived

Scientific research **has not found** effective ways to sober you up!

Popular hangover cures lack scientific evidence. Drugs (e.g. vitamin, aspirin) can only temporarily relieve some hangover symptoms. The most effective way is **not to drink**.

## Can "moderate" drinking protect our heart?

It's controversial 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 related to an enzyme (acetaldehyde dehydrogenase) responsible for breaking down alcohol. People deficient in this enzyme get flushed after drinking alcohol more easily. However, this cannot be used to determine whether the amount of alcohol consumed is beyond tolerance of the body.

## 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

# 2,600,000

deaths worldwide in 2019!

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 risk.

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

- 1,945 people were admitted to hospitals in 2022 due to alcohol use.
- 27 drink-driving accidents happened in 2023.

# Health News Digest 健康新聞摘要

## A young adult found unconscious in a taxi after drinking

A young man in his 20s was suspected of drinking a large amount of whiskey mixed with green tea when he was having a gathering with his friends in a bar. He was found unconscious on the way home in a taxi and certified dead after being sent to the hospital. A doctor suspected that the death might be related to heart attack or acute alcohol intoxication.



## Suspected drunk young man found dead after falling down a slope

In the early morning, a man in his 20s carrying a heavy smell of alcohol was accidentally fell from a slope about 10 meters high in Mid-Levels, Central District after drinking alcohol. He was sent to the hospital and certified dead after resuscitation attempts.

## A young man hit by a drunk driver

A young man in his 20s was knocked down by a vehicle driven by a friend who drank in a gathering. He sustained serious head injury and was certified dead after resuscitation in the hospital.

## Drunk women rescued after falling into Hong Kong Harbour

A woman in her 30s was suspected of being drunk and fell into the sea near Tsim Sha Tsui pier at night. Marine police and fireboats rushed to the scene and rescued the victim. She regained consciousness after being rescued and was taken to hospital for treatment.

## Suspected drunk teenager found dead in bed

A teenager under the age of 20 was found unconscious with a cold body and black face in bed by his family in the morning. He was certified dead by ambulance officers. Sources stated the teen went to a bar with friends after work and returned home with drunkenness in the early hours. His family did not notice any abnormalities at that time. The teenager was discovered unconscious after eight hours.



## A young woman knocked into unconsciousness after suspected drunkenness

A young woman aged less than 20 carrying a heavy smell of alcohol was knocked down by a taxi while passing by Tsim Sha Tsui. Her neck, hands and feet were injured and she fell unconscious. The victim was in serious condition. After caring by ambulance officers on the spot, she was sent to hospital for treatment.

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.

**\*Extracted from local news**





## 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's 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 have alcohol abuse or dependence in adulthood. The risk would be even higher if they started drinking earlier (before age 15).

*Results*

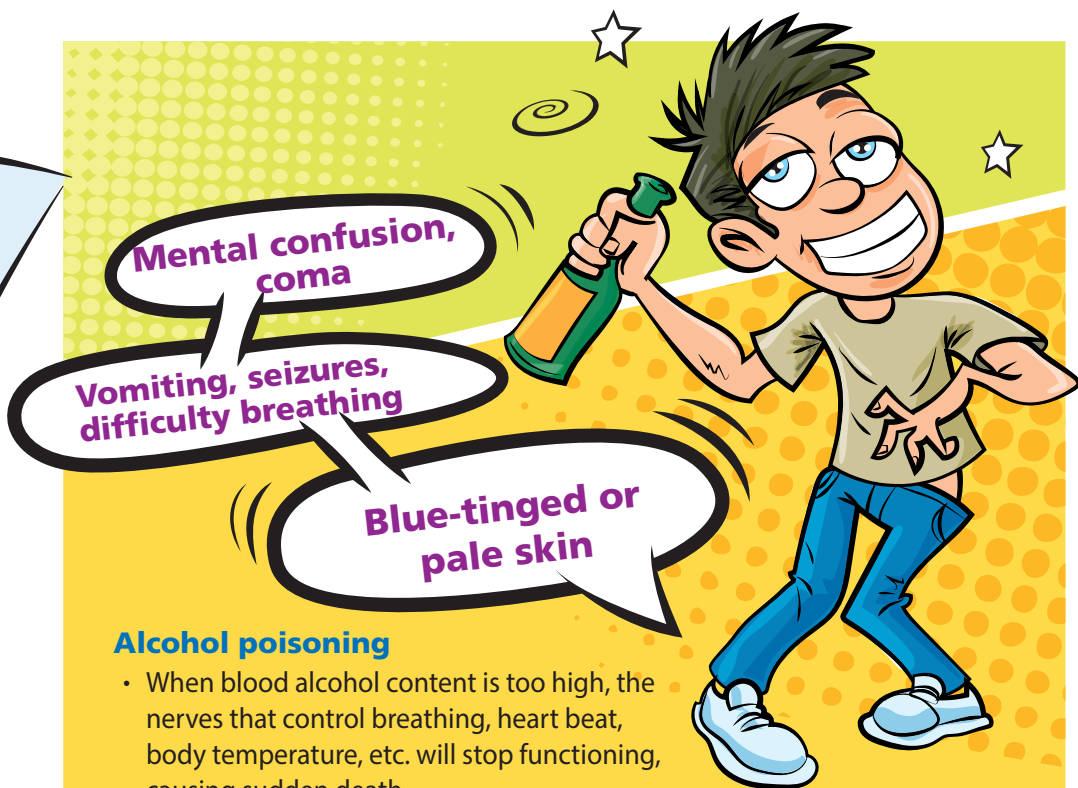
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## Excessive drinking can cause death

### 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...

# Alcohol-related laws

## Restaurants

A license is required for selling alcoholic drinks in premises (e.g. restaurants and bars), and licensees should not permit people aged under 18 to drink intoxicating liquor (i.e. alcohol that can make people drunk) in licensed premises.

## Sale and supply of intoxicating liquor to minors

If a person sell or supply intoxicating liquor to minors in the course of business, he/she would have committed an offence and could be fined up to HK\$50,000.

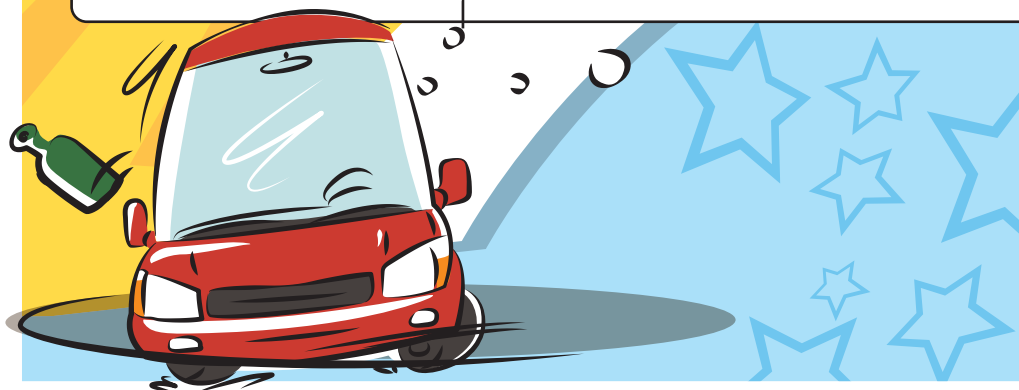
(Note: Intoxicating liquor is defined as alcohol that has more than 1.2 per cent ethyl alcohol by volume and is fit for or intended as a beverage.)



## Drink driving

If a driver's body alcohol content is found exceeding the prescribed limit, he/ she will be prosecuted.

Prescribed limit	Penalties
Every 100 ml blood contains 50 mg of alcohol; or Every 100 ml breath contains 22 µg of alcohol; or Every 100 ml urine contains 67 mg of alcohol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maximum fine of HK\$25,000 and imprisonment for 3 years;</li><li>• Mandated to attend a driving improvement course;</li><li>• Incur 10 driving offence points;</li><li>• Driving disqualification</li></ul>



**Alcohol is harmful,  
don't drink before you drive**

### How much alcohol can you drink before driving?

The alcohol absorption rate varies among people, so there is no general guideline on how much alcohol you can drink without exceeding the prescribed limit. **The safest way is not to drink before driving.**

Say **NO** to alcohol



Pick friends with whom  
you feel comfortable.

Build up a correct mindset:  
I have the right not to drink,  
and this won't affect my  
relationship with true friends.

Ask for non-alcoholic  
drinks, explain why you  
don't drink alcohol or  
give an excuse.



## Is drinking becoming your problem?

### 1 How often do you have a drink containing alcohol?

☐ Never ☐ Monthly or less ☐ 2-4 times a month ☐ 2-3 times a week

0 score 1 score 2 scores 3 scores

### 2 How many units of alcohol (i.e. 1 can of beer/ 1 glass of wine/ 1 peg of spirits) do you drink on a typical day?

☐ 0-2 ☐ 3-4 ☐ 5-6 ☐ 7-9 ☐  $\geq 10$

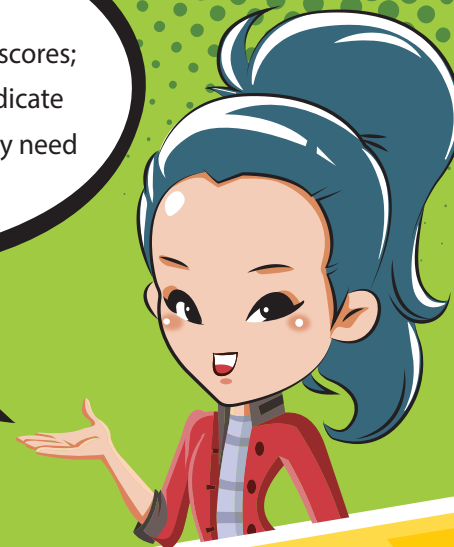
0 score 1 score 2 scores 3 scores 4 scores

### 3 How often do you drink at least 5 cans of beer/ 5 glasses of wine / 5 pegs of spirits on one occasion?

☐ Never ☐ Less than monthly ☐ Monthly ☐ Weekly ☐ Daily or almost daily

0 score 1 score 2 scores 3 scores 4 scores

Each question carries 0-4 scores; a total score of  $\geq 3$  may indicate risky drinking and you may need professional help.



### 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 : <https://icapt.tungwahcsd.org>

### Relevant information







For more information, please visit "Change for Health" website of the Department of Health at [www.change4health.gov.hk](http://www.change4health.gov.hk).



# 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/Alcopops	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**.