

Dear Colleague,

National Alcohol Harm Reduction Campaign

The Department of Health launched its '**Safe. Sensible. Social.**' alcohol strategy last year. The strategy sets out Government actions and commitments to combat excessive alcohol use, specifically its impact on health, crime and disorder.

The national campaign

On 19th May the Government is launching a campaign to raise awareness of alcohol units and the health risks of regularly exceeding Government 'lower-risk' drinking levels. The campaign is driven, in part, by research and evidence that shows that:

- NHS admissions for alcohol-related illness are rising fast year-on-year.
- Between 15,000 and 20,000 premature deaths in England and Wales each year are associated with alcohol misuse
- There are over 10 million people drinking above the Government's lower-risk levels
- Most people drinking above lower risk levels are unaware of the potential health risks

A first phase of a national advertising campaign, will explain how many units there are in typical alcoholic drinks, and what are the lower risk levels of drinking. The second phase of advertising will draw attention to the health risks of regularly exceeding these lower risk levels.

The advertising will be supported by a new NHS website (www.nhs.uk/units). For those people who identify that their drinking is above lower risk levels and are interested in cutting down, there will be support available in the form of a self-help booklet and a telephone helpline.

Your support as a key healthcare professional

As part of the campaign, the Department of Health has been working with leading clinical experts to help develop and test materials that will support you and your colleagues to be able easily and quickly to identify patients whose drinking is putting them at risk, as well as materials that will support you in providing them with advice on how to reduce their risks.

As a healthcare professional, your role is vital in supporting your patients to address this problem but the campaign also directs individuals to self-help programmes and other support, in recognition that this may be all that is needed for many.

This campaign forms a key element of a developing public health approach to this problem. It will assist the public to improve their own general health and well-being and it will also support you as health practitioners in contributing to this.

The Chief Medical Officer welcomes and supports this campaign, as do the Royal College of General Practitioners, Royal College of Nursing, Royal College of Physicians and Royal College of Psychiatrists; and I invite you to do the same.

Materials to help you

A number of materials will be freely available for you to use to coincide with the launch of the campaign. The following materials will be available on May 19th at:
www.nhs.uk/alcoholstakeholders

- A fact sheet – providing you and colleagues with general alcohol information including information about units and levels of risk
- A quick-reference wall-chart
- A fold-out card for patients explaining recommended lower risk limits; and some tools and contacts for support, for those who decide to cut down.

In early July, The Department of Health will also be launching an e-learning training module for practitioners on the use of alcohol interventions and brief advice.

Thank you for your continued support. Please stay in touch with the campaign at
www.nhs.uk/alcoholstakeholders.

Yours sincerely



Dr. Will Cavendish
Director of Health & Wellbeing
Department of Health

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