

MEDIA RELEASE

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Over 3700 deaths due to alcohol

Analysis has revealed the extent to which alcohol contributes to ill health and admissions to hospital in Scotland. The report by NHS Health Scotland shows that, alongside conditions commonly associated with alcohol consumption, such as liver disease, alcohol also has an important role in injuries and the development of other conditions, such as cancer and strokes.

NHS Health Scotland looked at the number of deaths and hospital admissions caused by alcohol consumption in 2015. The study also looked at what it was that people were dying from or alcohol-related conditions that made them ill.

In total, the analysis found that alcohol contributed to 3705 deaths, and that more of these deaths were from cancer than liver disease. Furthermore it showed that 41,161 people were admitted to hospital as a result of alcohol consumption in the same year, and that 1 in 4 of these admissions was due to unintentional injury.

Elaine Tod, Public Health Intelligence Adviser at NHS Health Scotland, said:

“Overall, the results tell us that alcohol consumption has a significant impact on health in Scotland – in fact, it contributed to over 100,000 years of life lost due to early death or living in poor health in 2015. Alcohol has a wider impact on our health than many people think.

“Reducing harmful alcohol consumption will reduce this impact, and that would benefit everyone: drinkers and non-drinkers, children and families, communities, the NHS and emergency services, employers and the economy. Preventative action is necessary if Scotland is to make long-term reductions in alcohol-related harm.”

-ENDS-

Contact

For further information or to arrange interviews with the team who developed the study, please contact NHS Health Scotland's Communications and Engagement Team on 07500 854574 or email nhs.HealthScotland-Communications@nhs.net.

Notes to Editors

1. The full “Hospital admissions, deaths and overall burden of disease attributable to alcohol consumption in Scotland” report will be available on www.healthscotland.scot from 00:01 on the 1st of February.
2. In 2009, a report presenting estimates of the proportion of hospital admissions and deaths attributable to alcohol consumption in Scotland, ‘Alcohol-attributable mortality and morbidity: alcohol population attributable fractions for Scotland’, was published¹.
3. Last year, we published the overarching ‘Scottish Burden of Disease’ (SBoD) report, quantifying the difference between the ideal of living to old age in good health, and the situation where healthy life is shortened by illness, injury, impairment and early death².
4. The aim of this new study was to bridge the approach taken in the Scottish report in 2009 and the SBoD study by revising estimates for patient admissions and deaths attributable to alcohol, and incorporating, for the first time in Scotland using real data, an overall measure of the burden of disease attributable to alcohol consumption. This allowed us to determine the level of risk of living with or dying from a condition, due to alcohol consumption.
5. The measure that quantifies the contribution of alcohol to the development of a health condition in the population is the *alcohol-attributable fraction* (AAF). It can be defined as: “the proportional reduction in population disease or mortality that would occur if exposure to a risk factor were reduced to an alternative ideal exposure scenario”.
6. In the report, the alcohol-attributable burden takes account of conditions deemed wholly attributable to alcohol (i.e. where the cause of disease or death is, by definition, 100% attributable to alcohol) and those deemed partially attributable to alcohol (i.e. where alcohol consumption accounts for only a proportion of disease or deaths).
7. Some key findings from the report include:
 - 41,161 patients were admitted to hospital due to alcohol in 2015 – these are the top 5 reasons for their admission:
 - Unintentional injuries, e.g. falls (11,068)
 - Mental ill health and behavioural disorders (8,509)

¹http://www.scotpho.org.uk/downloads/scotphoreports/scotpho090630_alcoholfractions_rep.pdf

² <http://www.healthscotland.scot/health-inequalities/measuring-health-inequalities/burden-of-disease>

- Heart conditions and strokes (7,704)
 - Liver disease and pancreatitis (4,291)
 - Cancer (3,123)
- Alcohol was a factor in 3705 deaths in Scotland in 2015 – these are the top 5 reasons for these deaths:
- Cancer (1,048)
 - Liver disease and pancreatitis (812)
 - Heart conditions and strokes (544)
 - Pneumonia (454)
 - Unintentional injuries e.g. falls (357)
- 8.** There are various ways to address alcohol harm. Our web pages on alcohol and interventions to reduce harm from it, set out some of these www.healthscotland.scot/alcohol.