



# Alcohol Our Favourite Drug

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1. Alcohol and Alcohol Problems in Scotland (adults & young people).
2. Brief Interventions on Alcohol.



# Alcohol and Alcohol Problems



# Alcohol Problems: young people / adults in Scotland-



- Cost Scotland £2.25 billion (2006/07)
- Contribute to many physical, mental health and social problems
  - A recent study by NHS Quality Improvement Scotland revealed that in a five week period 633 children, including fifteen under the age of 12, were taken to hospital casualty departments after drinking too much alcohol.
  - 66% of young offenders were drunk at the time of their offence.
- Affect non-drinkers as well as drinkers
  - 100,000 children in Scotland are living with a problem drinking parent.
  - Alcohol is a factor in 62% of domestic abuse incidents and 30% of divorces.
- Are increasing
  - Consumption is rising
  - Deaths are rising
  - Related diseases are rising
  - Related social problems are rising

# National Alcohol Strategy

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## Important national developments are:

- Changing Scotland's Relationship with Alcohol: A Framework for Action (The Scottish Government 2009)
- Alcohol etc. (Scotland) Bill 2009.
- National Youth Commission on Alcohol (Scottish Government / Young Scot 2009)
- HEAT Target (2008)
- NHS to deliver 149,449 - 'Alcohol Brief Interventions' - cumulatively over the period 2008/2009 to 2010/2011

# What is a Brief Intervention on Alcohol?

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- A BI is a conversation with an individual about their alcohol use that is:
  - Short
  - Evidence-based
  - Structured
  - Non-confrontational
  - Seeks to motivate and support the person to think about and/or plan behaviour change.
- **BIs are designed to work with people who drink 'more than is recommended' and should not be used with dependent drinkers as they are inappropriate and ineffective.**

# What is NOT a Brief Intervention on alcohol?

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- Merely giving an individual a leaflet about alcohol and telling them to read it, without any accompanying discussion, is not an evidence-based approach.
- On the other hand, brief interventions are not the same as alcohol counselling.
- BIs do not seem to require long discussions. 5-10 minutes is considered as effective as longer or multiple sessions.
- NB: All of these pointers come from research done in health settings (mainly primary care) – the equivalent research has not yet been done in non-health settings.



# What does a BI involve?

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## **BIs use a style based on 'Motivational Interviewing' techniques which include:**

- a collaborative style of conversation
- which practitioners can use to guide service users
- to explore and resolve their 'mixed' feelings (ambivalence) about a behavioural change
- in a way that enhances their motivation and ability to make positive choices.



# What is the evidence?

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- Where we do have evidence on the effectiveness of ABIs, it is very strong - including a large number of randomised control trials. Key findings include:
  - **Brief interventions can reduce total alcohol consumption and episodes of binge drinking in 'risky drinkers' for periods lasting up to a year.**
  - **The reduction in alcohol consumption is of the order of 15-35%** (see 'How Much is too Much' - continuum of risk).
  - Once again, in other settings the research hasn't been done yet but there is great interest in trying ABIs in different settings:
    - Trials in pharmacy, dentistry, NHS24 and criminal justice planned in Scotland.
    - Developing practice within social care and youth settings etc.

***Reminder- ABIs are designed to work with people who drink 'more than is recommended' (risky drinkers).***

# Who drinks more than is recommended?



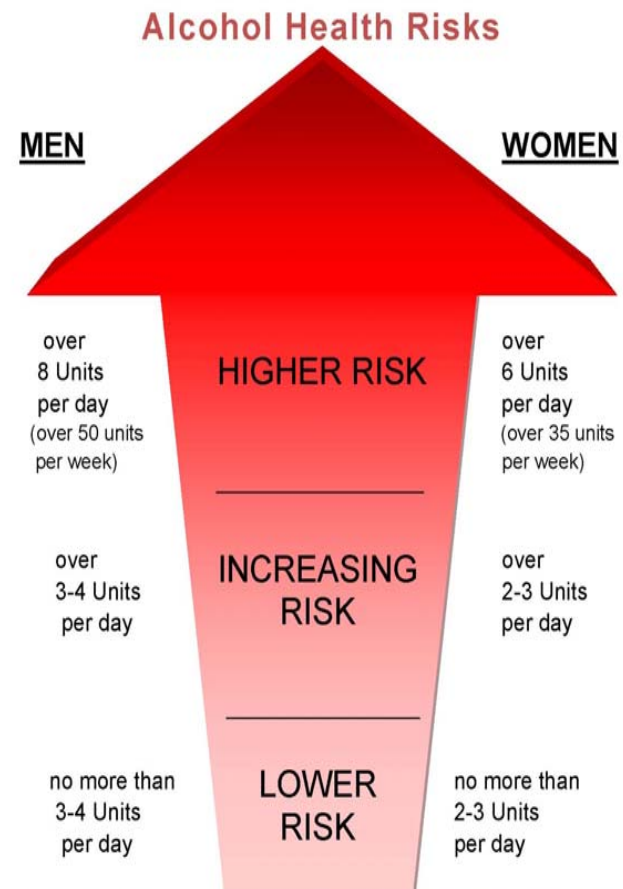
## 2003 Scottish Health Survey

- 34% of men reported usual weekly alcohol consumption in excess of the recommended limit of 21 units per week (3-4 units per day).
- The figure for women was 23% (14 units per week / 2-3 units daily).
- 33% of women and 40% of men reported binge drinking in the past week.
- In summary- 63-64% of men and women reported drinking more than the recommended daily limits on at least one day in the past week.

**Almost two thirds of the general (adult) population could therefore potentially benefit from a brief intervention!**

**No recommended guidance for young people**

## How Much is Too Much?



Circumstances when no alcohol should be consumed or when drinking limit/guideline is zero: pregnancy; driving; children and young people (no agreed age at which small amounts are OK); certain occupations i.e. drivers, operating machinery; certain medical conditions or medications; swimming and other sports etc.

(Adapted from Safe Sensible, Social – DOH)

# Brief Intervention Flow Chart



**1. Ways In- raising the issue of alcohol.....**

**2. Explore alcohol consumption/screen; assess risk, provide feedback.**

**RAPPORT & EMPATHY**  
Open Questions  
Affirm & Advise  
Summarise & Reflect  
Emphasise Personal Responsibility

**3.**

**5a. Explore Attitudes  
and Harm Reduction**

**5b. Discuss Effects of  
Behaviour, Benefits of  
Change & Build  
Motivation**

*Not (yet) ready to  
change  
/ ambivalent.*

**4. LISTEN**

*Ready to  
Change*

**6a. Discuss Options  
for Change**

**6b. Build Confidence,  
Skills and Coping  
Strategies**

**7. Exit or Referral (*at any time!*)**