

## Alcohol Health Harms

### Alcohol and Health

- There are no health benefits from consuming alcohol.

### Deaths caused by alcohol

- Every day **3 people die** in Ireland as a result of alcohol use.
- That's **88** deaths every month.
- **1 in 4 deaths under 50** years of age are due to alcohol
- It is a major factor in suicides with as many as **65% of suicides related to excessive drinking**
- The **risk of suicide is 8 times greater** amongst those who abuse alcohol
- **30% of drownings** are associated with alcohol use

### Binge drinking

- Ireland is the **top binge drinking nation**
- **75%** of alcohol in Ireland is consumed as part of a **binge drinking** session

### Alcohol and Teenagers and Young People

- Ireland ranks second place out of **194** countries for alcohol binge drinking for those aged 15 and over
- Adolescent brains really are different and they respond differently to alcohol.
- **Young people are more susceptible to alcohol induced memory impairment which leaves them less likely to experience the early warning signs of intoxication, such as clumsiness and unsteadiness.**
- Those who drink **alcopops** exclusively are **6 times more likely to suffer injury**

<http://www.shaap.org.uk/news/new-shaap-report-alcohol-and-the-developing-brain-evidence-review.html>

## Impact on children

- **4 in 10 children** in Ireland are at risk from being adversely affected by alcohol use
- **4 in 10 child protection cases** are associated with alcohol use
- It is a significant contributor to the **neglect and abuse of children**, to **domestic, sexual assault, violence** and **family breakdown**

## Alcohol and Cancer

- Drinking one standard alcoholic drink a day is associated with a 9% increase in the risk of developing breast cancer, while drinking 3-6 standard drinks a day increases the risk by 41% -
- Alcohol is a **class 1 carcinogen** which means the more you drink the higher your risk of getting **7 types of cancers**, including **bowel, breast cancer in women, liver, mouth, head and neck and the oesophagus**.
- Drinking less alcohol is a way to significantly reduce your risk of getting these cancers.
- According to the National Cancer Control Programme, **half of these could be prevented by adhering to Department of Health alcohol consumption guidelines (17 standard drinks for men; 11 standard drinks for women)**. The body can process one unit of alcohol per hour.
- **Alcohol is associated with 900 new cancer cases in Ireland every year and 500 cancer deaths**
- **At least half of alcohol-related cancers could be avoided by drinking within recommended levels.**
- **The highest risk is for head and neck cancer, but the greatest impact in Ireland relates to breast and bowel cancer, which are common here.**

See more at: <http://alcoholireland.ie/facts/alcohol-and-cancer/#sthash.1WS1wHZT.dpuf>

## Alcohol and Breast Cancer

- **There is clear and consistent evidence to link increased alcohol consumption with breast cancer**
- In relation to alcohol and breast cancer a sensible life-long approach to consumption is needed. The best advice from the National Cancer Control Programme is “less is best”.
- **Alcohol is an avoidable risk factor**
- **About 300 new cases of breast cancer (12% of all diagnosed every year) are associated with alcohol consumption**

- For every 10 grams – or 1 standard drink per day – there is a 7% increase in the risk of breast cancer.

[http://alcoholireland.ie/home\\_news/dr-marie-laffoy-alcohol-and-cancer/](http://alcoholireland.ie/home_news/dr-marie-laffoy-alcohol-and-cancer/)

## **Heart Disease and Stroke risk**

- **Drinking too much – as many Irish people currently do – can lead to heart disease and stroke.**
- **Too many people are currently exceeding recommended maximum limits of alcohol. This is putting them at risk of heart disease and stroke which could be prevented by reducing their alcohol intake.**
- We all know someone who has been affected by heart disease or stroke and we all know that prevention is key. The provisions of the Public Health Alcohol Bill can support us all to moderate our drinking to prevent serious health problems down the line.
- When used in excess, alcohol can cause high blood pressure, strokes, heart rhythm disturbances and heart failure.
- **The good news is that people can achieve quite dramatic changes when they abstain from alcohol, or cut down significantly. Over time they lose weight and their blood pressure improves, sometimes resulting in stopping blood pressure medication. So the measures in the Public Health Alcohol Bill can directly support people to improve their health.**

## **On road deaths**

- **Alcohol is a factor in one in 3 fatal collisions**
- **Alcohol consumption was a factor in 62% of all single-vehicle, single occupant crashes**
- 21% of fatal road crashes that happen between 6am and 12 noon are alcohol related.

## **On brain injuries**

- **Alcohol use is a factor in 1 in 4 traumatic brain injuries**
- **Alcohol use is a factor in 80% of assaults**

## **On Suicide**

- **The link between alcohol use and suicide has been well established. Alcohol consumption is considered a significant factor in the rate of suicide among young men in particular.**

- Suicide is the leading cause of death in young Irish men between 15 and 24 years of age – and accounts for more than one in 3 deaths in that age group as a result of suicide
- There is clear evidence that excessive drinking is associated with poor mental health and low self-esteem

## Alcohol and Weight

- Ireland is on course to become the fattest country in Europe by 2030.
  - Currently 2 out of 3 every 3 adults are overweight or obese.
  - Obesity is a major risk factor for heart disease and cancer.
  - We are more likely to think about how many calories we are eating through food but do you know how many calories you are taking in through alcohol? Alcohol provides a lot of calories but very little nourishment. It doesn't fill you up, but if you ate the equivalent calories in food, you would probably feel really full.
  - **Alcohol is high in calories and may contribute to excess weight gain** and associated cardiovascular problems.
  - One standard drink contains 10g of alcohol, which amounts to 70 calories.
  - If you have 5 standard drinks of a spirit with cola you will consume 765 kcal or 11 digestive biscuits worth of calories.
  - If you have 5 standard drinks of a spirit with diet cola/ mineral you will consume 420 kcal or 5 digestive biscuits worth of calories.
  - If every second drink you have is a non alcoholic diet mineral or water, you will consume 140 kcal or 2 digestive biscuits worth of calories (i.e. 2 standard drinks of spirit with diet mineral).
- <https://www.indi.ie/fact-sheets/healthy-eating,-healthy-weight-and-dieting/659-alcohol-and-weight-loss.html>

## Labels on alcohol

- **For the first time labels on alcohol products will include information that will tell consumers what they are consuming and the impact on their health and weight.**
- Over 90% of Irish adults don't know what is meant by a standard drink. This is equivalent to a small glass of wine (100mls) a half pint of beer or lager or a pub measure of spirits. This means

for example that a pint of beer is two standard drinks and a bottle of wine is eight standard drinks. The new labels will show alcohol content in grams.

- Alcohol is unlike other products sold in retailers and better labelling can help consumers to make better and more informed choices around alcohol.
- 95% have said they support labels on alcohol (Health Research Board).

## **Children need to be protected from Alcohol marketing**

### **Irish children are exposed to large volumes of alcohol marketing, research finds**

- A study carried out by the Health Promotion Research Centre at NUI Galway, commissioned by Alcohol Action Ireland, found that Irish children are exposed to large volumes of alcohol marketing, which increases their likelihood of drinking alcohol and engaging in risky drinking behaviour.
  - **More than 90% of children reported that they were exposed to traditional, or offline, alcohol advertisements in the week prior to the study and more than half saw four or more alcohol advertisements per day**
  - **77% of children reported exposure to alcohol marketing online**
  - **61% of children reported that they owned alcohol branded merchandise**
  - **Dr Michal Molcho, of the Health Promotion Research Centre at NUI Galway**, said their findings indicate that there is widespread exposure to alcohol marketing among children aged 13 and upward. “We found that almost all children reported seeing or hearing a traditional or off-line advertisement for alcohol drinks, while 77% were exposed to online marketing and 61% reported that they own alcohol-branded merchandise.”
  - Dr Molcho said that increased exposure to alcohol marketing increased the chances of children to report drinking, binge drinking, and drunkenness. “These findings clearly indicate that the more intense the exposure, the greater the risk of drinking alcohol and engaging in risky drinking behaviours. Given that these findings echo previous studies, coupled with the vulnerability of young people to alcohol, there is a clear need for immediate action on alcohol marketing regulation.”
  - **Dr Patrick Kenny, School of Marketing, Dublin Institute of Technology**, said the study provides a snapshot illustrating how little protection is currently afforded to Irish children from alcohol marketing. “The bottom line is that the current regulatory system does not protect children from exposure to alcohol marketing and this failure is associated with increased consumption. In a very real sense, these children are victims of society’s failure to protect them and creating an environment where children are free from alcohol marketing is a children’s rights issue that requires immediate attention.”
  - Dr Kenny said that digital alcohol marketing, and in particular social media marketing, is now a central element of the marketing communications mix and needs to be regulated.

- “Digital marketing allows for more effective targeting of consumers and the interactive nature of this communication makes it arguably more effective than traditional passive advertising methods. It is worth noting that digital marketing operates largely below the radar of policy makers because they do not form part of the target audience, thus making digital marketing significantly harder to monitor or regulate.”
- **Conor Cullen, Head of Communications and Advocacy, Alcohol Action Ireland**, said it is vital that we legislate to regulate alcohol marketing, which sees Irish children continuously exposed to positive, risk-free images of alcohol and its use, which are far removed from the reality of the situation.
- Alcohol use is a serious risk to children and young people’s health and wellbeing. Far from being a rite of passage, drinking alcohol may well serve to delay the development of vital coping skills, project young people into risky situations and lay the ground-work for future physical and mental health difficulties.”Mr Cullen said we need to protect children from alcohol marketing if we are serious about supporting them to make healthy choices now and in the future.
- “The forthcoming Public Health (Alcohol) Bill is an important first step in this regard and will finally move us away from the existing systems of self-regulation governing alcohol marketing. These systems have proved completely ineffective in terms of protecting children from exposure to alcohol marketing, which is such a powerful and sophisticated influence on their drinking behaviour and expectations.”

[http://alcoholireland.ie/media\\_releases/irish-children-are-exposed-to-large-volumes-of-alcohol-marketing-research-finds/](http://alcoholireland.ie/media_releases/irish-children-are-exposed-to-large-volumes-of-alcohol-marketing-research-finds/)

## UK Research

- Research in the UK, where the drinks industry spends £800 million a year on advertising, showed that children as young as 10 years-old are familiar with and can readily identify alcohol brands, logos, and characters from alcohol advertising on TV.
- In many instances this recognition was greater than for non-alcoholic products with known appeal to children.
- The study also provides new evidence that many children are familiar with the link between alcohol brands and the sports teams and tournaments that they sponsor.
- Boys in particular are aware from a young age of the association between football and beer brands, created by sponsorship.
- The volume of marketing promoting positive associations between alcohol and sport is such that by adulthood the associations are likely to have become automatic, formed in the cognitive structures of their memory.

<http://www.drugs.ie/resourcesfiles/ResearchDocs/Europe/Research/2015/ChildrensRecognitionOfAlcoholMarketingBriefing.pdf>