

WELSH HEALTH CIRCULAR



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

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For Action by: N/A

Action required by: N/A

Sender: Dr Ruth Hussey OBE, Chief Medical Officer / Medical Director for NHS Wales

HSSG Welsh Government Contact(s):

Richard Lewis / Ross Matthews, Public Health Division, Welsh Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NQ,
029 2082 6246 / 029 2082 5656.

Enclosure(s): None

Dear colleague,

New guidelines on drinking alcohol published in the UK

I am writing to inform you that the UK Chief Medical Officers have issued revised guidelines for alcohol consumption (on 08/01/16).

The new guidelines follow a detailed review of previous advice published in 1995, and are informed by the latest scientific evidence. Work on the review has been led by a panel of experts in public health and behavioural science.

The new guidelines include:

- a single guideline for men and women: this will now be 14 units a week for both men and women;
- a recommendation not to 'save up' 14 units for one or two days - but instead to spread them over three or more days;
- there is no 'safe' level of alcohol to drink during pregnancy; and,
- advice on single episodes of drinking.

Health Professionals will wish to note that the new guidelines for drinking alcohol will take effect immediately. The guidelines are there for people to make informed decisions about their drinking, to make it as easy as possible to make healthy choices, and to keep the risk of cancer and liver disease low.

The Department of Health (UK Government) has launched a consultation on the wording of the guidelines, and whether there should be a guideline based on a number of units for single episodes of drinking. The Welsh Government, the Scottish Government and Northern Ireland Executive are supporting the consultation, and I am encouraging individuals, communities and stakeholders to take the opportunity to provide their views. The web-link below includes the following consultation documents:

- UK Chief Medical Officers' Alcohol Guidelines Review: Summary of the proposed new guidelines;
- How to keep health risks from drinking alcohol to a low level: public consultation on proposed new guidelines;
- Alcohol Guidelines Review – Report from the Guidelines Development Group to the UK Chief Medical Officers.

www.gov.uk/government/consultations/health-risks-from-alcohol-new-guidelines

The consultation will be open until Friday 1 April 2016. The Welsh Government will work with partners, including Public Health Wales, to inform members of the public, health professionals and wider organisations of these revised, evidence-based guidelines.

Please contact my colleagues in Public Health Division of the Welsh Government if you would like to discuss any aspect of the guidelines (telephone: 029 2082 6246 (Richard Lewis); 029 2082 5656 (Ross Matthews)).

'Working Together to Reduce Harm' Substance Misuse Delivery Plan (2016-18)

I also wish to bring to your attention the Welsh Government's draft Substance Misuse Delivery Plan for 2016-18, which has been published for a twelve week consultation from 6 January to 30 March 2016. The draft plan has been developed in a way that provides clarity on the contribution the substance misuse agenda can make to the goals of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, and has been shaped by the principles of prudent health and care.

The new plan focusses on a number of key measures, including a strong focus on tackling the harms associated with risky drinking behaviours. The plan also sets out measures to reduce the stigma for those looking for help with their substance misuse issues. Again, please take time to view and share the consultation at the link below:

<http://gov.wales/consultations/healthsocialcare/working-together/>

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ruth Hussey". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Dr Ruth Hussey CB, OBE