ALCOHOL IS AN IMPORTANT PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE

The harmful use of alcohol is a global problem that compromises both individual and social development. Alcohol is a causal factor in more than 200 disease and injury conditions and the world's third-largest risk factor for premature mortality, disability and loss of health; it is the leading risk factor in the Western Pacific and the Americas and the second largest in Europe for these problems.

Did you know?

Between 2005 and 2010 in the Western Pacific Region, total alcohol per capita consumption increased while the prevalence of current drinkers decreased.

Five-year change in alcohol consumption

It has been recorded that there are significant changes on the consumption of alcohol for various countries mainly China and India. Figure shows that certain countries have increased consumption, remained stable while others decreased consumption in this five-year trend (2006-2010).
In the world

- 3.3 million people die every year because of alcohol. This is roughly 6% of all deaths in the world.
- Alcohol is a causal factor in more than 200 disease and injury conditions.

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Alcohol harms young people and the problem is worse than you think

Young people are more vulnerable to alcohol-related harm because of specific biological, neurological, social and psychological factors. It is the biggest risk factor for deaths in young people 15–29 years of age. This is an important public health concern in the Western Pacific Region, where 22% of the population (235 million people) is 10–19 years of age. In terms of consumption patterns, around a third of older adolescents (aged 15-19 years) are current drinkers, and more than one in 10 (12.5%) engage in binge or heavy episodic drinking. Consumption in young people is expected to increase due to marketing strategies of the alcohol industry that appear to target the youth. New sweeter, fruit-flavored and "lighter" alcohol beverages with the same alcohol content appeal to younger consumers, and advertising is shifting from traditional approaches to sponsorship of musical and sporting events that young people patronize. Social media, which is popular with youth, is now a key marketing instrument.

In the Western Pacific Region

- Every minute 1 person dies from alcohol-related harm.
- 1 in every 20 deaths is caused by alcohol consumption.
- Heavy drinking among adolescents is relatively common – one of the highest rates in the world

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Publications:

Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health 2014

Upcoming events:

- WHO Regional Forum on Protecting Young People from the Harmful Use of Alcohol 29-30 April, Hong Kong SAR (China)

Next Issue:
How alcohol harms

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Mental Health and Substance Abuse
Division of NCD and Health through the Life-Course
World Health Organization
Regional Office for the Western Pacific
P.O Box 2932
1000 Manila
mhs@wpro.who.int