



INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH AND PRODUCTIVITY MANAGEMENT

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Reducing Risks: Alcohol and the Workplace

DIAGEO

Celebrating Life, Every Day, Every Where

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Harmful Use of Alcohol is a Business Concern

While drinking responsibly and in moderation can be an enjoyable part of everyday life, harmful drinking, whether on a single occasion or over long periods of time, can have negative consequences for individuals, families and businesses. As part of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and Non-Communicable Disease Framework, all member states of the UN agreed to a voluntary target of 10% reduction in the harmful use of alcohol, as appropriate, within the national context. Employers have an interest in helping to meet that goal.

What is moderate or low risk drinking?

For the United States, the National Institute of Alcohol Use and Alcoholism (NIAAA) offer drinking guidelines for men and women (Exhibit 1).

Exhibit 1: NIAAA Low-Risk Drinking Guidelines

Low-risk drinking limits		MEN	WOMEN
	On any single DAY	No more than 4  drinks on any day **AND**	No more than 3  drinks on any day **AND**
	Per WEEK	No more than 14  drinks per week	No more than 7  drinks per week
To stay low risk, keep within BOTH the single-day AND weekly limits.			

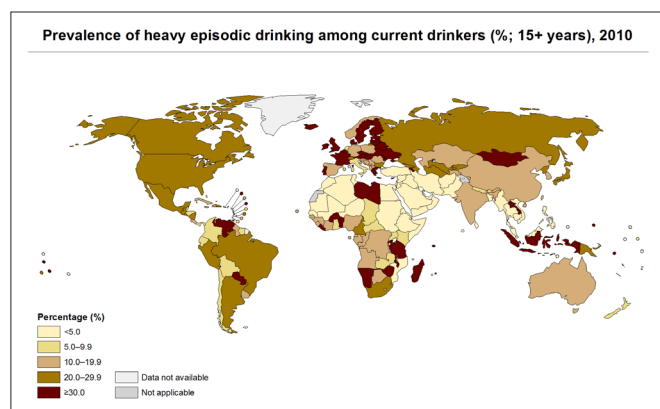
Moderate drinking guidelines for countries around the world can be found at: <http://www.iard.org/policy-tables/drinking-guidelines-general-population/>. For some people, the best decision is not to drink, including for women who are pregnant or likely to become pregnant, youth (legal age differs by country), individuals who cannot control their drinking, and people who have a medical condition or who are taking medications for which alcohol is contraindicated.

Heavy Episodic Drinking

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines heavy episodic drinking as consumption of 60 or more grams of pure alcohol (6+ standard drinks in most countries) on at least one single occasion at least monthly. The acute consequences of drinking such as alcohol poisoning, injury and violence are closely linked to heavy episodic drinking. The negative health effects of alcohol are associated with heavy drinking. Therefore, even if a person's average level of alcohol consumption is relatively low, it is important to monitor heavy episodic drinking.¹

Rates of heavy episodic drinking vary considerably from country to country. The WHO map (Exhibit 2) shows the percentage of each nation's population age 15 and older that drinks excessively.² In general, the WHO reported the more affluent a country, the higher the level of alcohol consumption and the fewer people who abstain from drinking. In poorer countries, the consequences of excessive alcohol use for individuals and families may be more profound because fewer safety nets exist in those societies to buffer the negative effects.³

Exhibit 2: WHO Excessive Alcohol Consumption Internationally



Alcohol Dependence

Another category of harmful drinking is alcohol dependence. This is a clinical diagnosis for individuals who have

difficulty controlling their drinking, which interferes with all aspects of their lives. Once identified, individuals with an alcohol dependence problem will likely need a referral to treatment.

Alcohol and the Workplace

Most adults who engage in harmful drinking work. Studies show that four out of five adults who drink excessively are employed or are dependents of workers.⁴ Harmful use of alcohol by workers and their family members hits the bottom line in several ways. Harmful drinking increases absenteeism, diminishes productivity, and may increase risks of on-the-job injury and disability.

At Risk: Young Workers

Young workers who engage in harmful drinking are a high-risk group. 18 to 25 year olds are less risk-averse and may engage in more risky behaviors while drunk.¹ They are more likely to be injured, get into fights and spend more time unproductively at work than older workers who engage in harmful drinking. A much larger percentage of young workers drink excessively, as much as 2½ times more than adults 26 years and older.¹

Alcohol misuse and harmful drinking impact work, even if no one actively drinks on the job:

- Health care costs for employees with alcohol use disorders are twice as high as those for other employees.⁵
- People who consume alcohol excessively are three-and-a-half times more likely to be involved in a workplace accident, resulting in increased workers' compensation and disability claims.⁶
- One in five workers reports being injured or put in danger on the job because of a co-worker's excessive drinking, or having to work harder, redo work, or cover for a co-worker as a result of that employee's excessive drinking.⁷
- More than half of workers who have a family member who drinks excessively report that their own ability to function at work and at home was negatively affected by their family member's drinking.⁸

Businesses Can Act

Interventions around alcohol in the workplace range from legally required programmes in some countries to full reliance on employer-led programmes and measures, such as education and counselling, in others. However, even where legislation exists, implementation may be largely voluntary and its scope left to the discretion of the employer, particularly in the private sector. A model framework for managing alcohol-related issues in the workplace has been developed by the International Labour Organization (ILO, 1996) in its Code of Practice (http://www.ilo.org/safework/info/standards-and-instruments/codes/WCMS_107799/lang--en/index.htm).

There are relatively simple ways that businesses can introduce programmes to reduce alcohol-related costs and educate employees. Below are descriptions and links to resources. In newsletter #2 we will go into more depth on some of these resources, including options for implementing early screening and brief intervention.

DRINKiQ Curricula and E-Learning Interactive Training

The purpose of these interactive workplace educational programmes developed by Diageo is to raise awareness about the effects of drinking and encourage responsible decisions about drinking or not drinking. The face-to-face workshops or on-line training are designed to be interactive and engaging for a general audience. The courses have clear learning objectives so that people who take the course will learn about how alcohol affects the body, gender differences in how we react to alcohol, how long it takes to metabolize a drink, the size of various drinks and our tendency to over-serve, moderate drinking guidelines and responsible drinking and hosting tips.

These resources are available free of charge. The e-learning course can be found at DRINKiQ.com on the home page on the UK site in September, the US site in October and several other sites to follow. DRINKiQ (www.DRINKiQ.com) is available in more than a dozen languages, with content targeted to specific cultures. The website also contains full nutrition and alcohol content information for all Diageo brands, and a fun, easy-to-use drinks calculator and a calorie counter. Additional resources at country level are also made available.

Rethinking Drinking (www.rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov) and the Rethinking Drinking booklet

Produced by the U.S. National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), this is an online resource and a free brochure that targets adults who drink more than may be healthy or safe for them, but are unaware that their drinking habits are putting them at risk for alcohol-related problems. Other users of the website or readers of the brochure may already have symptoms of an alcohol use disorder but do not recognize the riskiness of their drinking. Others may know that their drinking is causing problems, but don't know where to turn for help in cutting back or quitting. Rethinking Drinking provides evidence-based information for all of these people, along with tips for making a change. A Spanish language version is available from NIAAA.

AlcoholScreening.org (www.alcoholscreening.org)

A project of the Partnership for Drug-Free Kids and Boston University School of Public Health, AlcoholScreening.org helps individuals assess their own alcohol consumption patterns to determine if their drinking is likely to be harming their health or increasing their risk for future harm. Through education and referral, the site urges those whose drinking is harmful or hazardous to take positive action, and informs everyone who consumes alcohol about guidelines for lower-risk drinking.

Screening and Brief Intervention (www.sbirdeducation.webs.com)

Screening and brief intervention (SBI) for risky alcohol use can be implemented via workplace wellness programs, occupational health managers, Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs), and health care providers. The *sbirdeducation* website shows how simple screening for risky alcohol use can educate workers about low-risk alcohol use, and motivate those who drink in unsafe or unhealthy ways to modify their drinking. If the screening indicates increased risk, a short counseling session can help most people who use alcohol in a hazardous way to change their drinking habits and, thereby, reduce their risks. Research, training materials and training videos on workplace SBI are available free at <http://bigsbirdeducation.webs.com/thebiginitiative.htm>.

The Multigenerational Workforce (www.valueoptions.com/spotlight_YIW/tools.htm)

This resource provides tip sheets, posters and other educational material to help businesses tailor communications about unhealthy drinking to the specific needs of their workforces. Posters, email messages, and educational campaign material are available at no charge and can be downloaded from the website. This resource was developed by NORC at the University of Chicago and the EAP vendor, ValueOptions.

Assure Access to Affective Medical Treatments for Alcohol use Disorders by Health Care Systems Treating Employees

Counseling and medications are effective components in the treatment for alcohol use disorders. Although specific counseling approaches may vary, all address:

- enhancing motivation to stop or reduce alcohol use;
- teaching coping skills;
- changing things that reinforce unhealthy use;
- managing feelings and mood associated with cutting back; and
- strengthening social supports for harm reduction.⁹

Medications are also very useful.¹⁰ Currently, there are four medications that have been approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for use in treating alcohol dependence: disulfiram, oral naltrexone, acamprostate, and an intramuscular (IM) once-a-month naltrexone injection.¹¹

Bottom line: It is much more cost-effective to help employees deal with harmful drinking than to ignore the problem or to terminate and replace them.

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About Diageo

Diageo is a global leader in beverage alcohol with an outstanding collection of brands including Johnnie Walker, Crown Royal, J&B, Buchanan's and Windsor whiskies, Smirnoff, Cîroc and Ketel One vodkas, Captain Morgan, Baileys, Don Julio, Tanqueray and Guinness.

Diageo is listed on both the London Stock Exchange (DGE) and the New York Stock Exchange (DEO) and its products are sold in more than 180 countries around the world. For more information about Diageo, its people, brands, and performance, visit www.diageo.com. Visit Diageo's global responsible drinking resource, www.DRINKiQ.com, for information, initiatives, and ways to share best practice.

Celebrating life, every day, everywhere.

About Institute for Health and Productivity Management (IHPM) and WorkPlace Wellness Alliance (WPWA) | Advancing Health and Performance Globally | IHPM WPWA is a non-profit enterprise devoted to establishing the value of employee health as a global business asset. The core principle at the center of all of the Institute's work is that health, well-being, and productivity are global issues impacting the success of companies and nations. IHPM provides data analyses, measurement tools, and HPM services and consultation to its members and clients in the United States, Latin America, Europe, Middle East and Asia. The Institute helps employers to identify the cost impact of employee health on business performance, choose the best programs to reduce this impact by improving health and productivity, and measure the success of their efforts. The institute is a unique driving force for changing health from a medical cost to a business asset for employers and nations. This unique status was recently acknowledged by the World Economic Forum when it chose IHPM as a partner for its global WorkPlace Wellness Alliance. The WorkPlace Wellness Alliance [WPWA] is a global group of multinational companies focused on transforming workplaces into environments that promote and sustain optimal health, wellbeing and performance.

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