

Press release: Public Health England and Drinkaware launch Drink Free Days

A YouGov poll has found that one in five of UK adults are drinking above the [Chief Medical Officer's low risk drinking guidelines](#) and more than two thirds of these say they would find cutting down on their drinking harder to do than one or more other lifestyle changes – improving their diet, exercising more, or reducing their smoking, if they were smokers.

Working together for the first time, Public Health England and alcohol education charity [Drinkaware](#) are today (10 September 2018) jointly launching a new campaign 'Drink Free Days' to help people cut down on the amount of alcohol they are regularly drinking.

The campaign will be encouraging middle-aged drinkers to use the tactic of taking more days off from drinking as a way of reducing their health risks from alcohol.

The more alcohol people drink , the greater their risk of developing a number of serious potentially life limiting health conditions, such as high blood pressure and heart disease, as well as 7 types of cancer.

Regular drinking also increases the amount of calories consumed and can contribute to weight gain and obesity.

Evidence from behavioural science suggests that simple and easy ways of helping people to change their behaviour are the most effective, which is why Drinkaware and PHE have chosen to focus on Drink Free Days.

Pre-campaign research also found that the concept resonated strongly with people and was seen as clear to follow, positive and achievable.

Duncan Selbie, Chief Executive at Public Health England, said:

Many of us enjoy a drink – but whether it's a few in the pub after work a couple of times a week, some beers on the sofa watching the football or regular wine with our dinner – it's all too easy to let our drinking creep up on us.

While the link with liver disease is well known, many people are not aware that alcohol can cause numerous other serious health problems, such as high blood pressure, heart disease as well as several cancers. It's also an easy way to pile on the pounds.

About 10 million people in England are drinking in ways that increases the risks and many are struggling to cut down. Setting yourself a target of having more drink free days every week is an easy way to drink less and reduce the risks to your health.

Commenting, Drinkaware Chief Executive Elaine Hindal said:

The more you drink, the greater the risk to your health. It's really that simple.

But an increasing number of people, particularly middle aged drinkers, are drinking in ways that are putting them at risk of serious and potentially life limiting conditions such as heart disease, liver disease and some types of cancer.

That's where this campaign comes in and we're delighted to be joining forces with Public Health England for the first time to help give people that knowledge.

Having a few drink free days each week, will help reduce the risks to your health and improve your wellbeing.

This new partnership between Public Health England and Drinkaware is a fresh and bold step in our work to reduce alcohol harm. PHE's One You digital platform has a strong track record on encouraging behaviour change; Drinkaware is an independent educational charity with an extensive reach to the key audiences. Working together to help communicate the message that having drink free days will reduce the risks to your health is the first move in what we hope will be a long term partnership.

Former England and Liverpool footballer John Barnes is supporting the campaign which will be providing people with a range of tools and resources to help them cut back and make better choices about their drinking.

John said:

This is an important campaign highlighting how many of us don't realise that we are drinking in ways that could be harming our health and how we are struggling to moderate.

A beer here and a glass of wine there might not seem like much but the units can add up and so too can the health risks.

Having a few more days a week that are drink free is a great way of taking control of our drinking and making healthier choices for the future which is why I am supporting this fantastic campaign.

A dedicated website provides all the information, resources and apps to help support people, including the [One You Drink Free Days app](#) and Drinkaware's [Drink Compare Calculator](#).

Background

YouGov Survey

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from [YouGov](#). YouGov interviewed 8,906 UK adults aged 18 to 85 online between 14 May and 5 June 2018. This included a subset of 1,847 adults who drank over 14 units in the last week. Data has been weighted to be representative of the UK adult population according to gender, age, social grade and region.

Proportion of adults drinking above the lower risk guidelines

Research shows that middle-aged drinkers are more likely to be drinking more (above the 14 units lower risk guidelines) than the general population: [Adult Survey for England 2016 – Adult Health Trends \(table 10\)](#).

Campaign evaluation

PHE and [Drinkaware](#) will separately undertake full independent evaluations and peer review processes.

The public health burden of alcohol

Evidence review: this PHE review looks at the [impact of alcohol on the public health and the effectiveness of alcohol control policies](#).

Alcohol consumption: advice on low risk drinking

[UK Chief Medical Officer's guidelines](#) on how to keep health risks from drinking alcohol to a low level.

Drink Free Days app

The [Drink Free Days app](#) is a simple and easy way to track the days you drink alcohol and the days you don't.

One You

Launched in March 2016, [One You](#) from Public Health England is the first nationwide programme to support adults in making simple changes that can have a huge influence on their health, could help prevent diseases such as type 2 diabetes, cancer and heart disease and reduce risk of suffering a stroke or living with dementia, disability and frailty in later life. It aims to inform, energise and engage millions of adults, especially those in the 40 to 60 'middle-aged' group, to make changes to improve their own health by eating well, moving more, drinking less and quitting smoking. One You also provides information on free health checks and how people can reduce their stress levels and sleep better.

About Drinkaware

[Drinkaware](#) is an independent charity which aims to reduce alcohol-related harm by helping people make better choices about their drinking. We achieve this by providing impartial, evidence based information, advice and practical

resources; raising awareness of alcohol and its harms, and working collaboratively with partners..Follow them on Twitter @drinkaware.

About PHE

[Public Health England](#) exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. We do this through world-leading science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and providing specialist public health services. We are an executive agency of the Department of Health and Social Care, and a distinct organisation with operational autonomy. We provide government, local government, the NHS, Parliament, industry and the public with evidence-based professional, scientific expertise and support. Follow us on Twitter: [@PHE_uk](#) and Facebook: www.facebook.com/PublicHealthEngland.

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