

# Alcohol Related Harm in India

*- a fact sheet*

## **INDIAN ALCOHOL POLICY ALLIANCE**

Policy Advocacy Alliance against harms related to alcohol use

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# Alcohol - Some Facts

Alcohol is a depressant drug that

- \* slows down the activity of the brain
- \* contains absolutely no nutrients
- \* does not help relieve tension, induce sleep or solve problems



All alcoholic beverages contain the same mood-changing agent - ethyl alcohol though in varying percentage.

45.55%

**Distilled Spirits**  
(whisky, brandy, rum)

35-75%

**Arrack**

10-12%

**Wine**

6-8%

**Beer / Toddy**

**Alcohol needs no digestion and is absorbed rapidly into the blood stream.** Cold showers or coffee do not remove the effect of alcohol from the body only the liver can. It takes the liver about one hour to break down one drink of alcohol.



**About 10 to 15% of alcohol users develop alcohol dependence and become alcoholics.** Anybody can become an alcoholic - age, education, intelligence or socio-economic status has nothing to do with it. The person increases the quantity or frequency and continues drinking even though alcohol causes problems to his health, work life, family or social relationships.

**Alcoholism is treatable.** With treatment it is possible to give up drinking totally and live without alcohol. However, as with other diseases, the earlier the help is sought, the lesser the damage and the better the recovery.

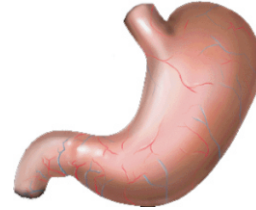


# Alcohol and Medical Problems

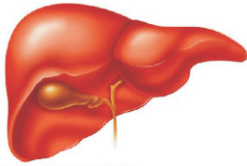
*Alcohol is a toxic substance* that can affect each and every organ in the body. The major health problems associated with excessive alcohol intake are listed below.

## Stomach the entry point

- Slows down functioning and interferes with digestion
- Irritates the lining of the food pipe and stomach
- Causes gastritis and ulcer
- Increases incidence of cancer



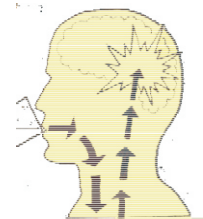
## Liver metabolizes food to facilitate absorption



- Can lead to fatty liver (sluggishness due to accumulation of fat cells) and alcoholic hepatitis (jaundice- like symptoms)
- Permanent damage - cirrhosis

## Brain the control centre

- Slows down the functioning
- Causes loss of inhibitions and affects judgment and coordination
- Leads to depression, poor memory and concentration
  - Triggers psychiatric problems
  - Damages brain cells permanently



## Heart the life line



- Interferes with normal heart rhythm
- Excessive alcohol use can
  - damage blood vessels
  - weaken heart muscles
  - cause enlargement

## Other effects

- Neuritis tingling sensation, tremors in hands and feet
- Pancreatitis painful inflammation of the pancreas
- Degeneration of muscles due to protein loss
- Malnutrition leading to many problems ranging from tiredness onto poor memory
- Sexual problems

## Alcohol Consumption in India



Alcohol consumption has been steadily increasing in developing countries like India and decreasing in developed countries since the 1980s. The pattern of drinking to intoxication is more prevalent in developing countries indicating higher levels of risk due to drinking.

62.5 million alcohol users estimated in India

Per capita consumption of alcohol increased by 106.7% over the 15-year period from 1970 to 1996.

Due to its large population, India has been identified as the potentially third largest market for alcoholic beverages in the world which has attracted the attention of multi national liquor companies.



Sale of alcohol has been growing steadily at 6% and is estimated to grow at the rate of 8% per year.



About 80% of alcohol consumption is in the form of hard liquor or distilled spirits showing that the majority drink beverages with a high concentration of alcohol.

Branded liquor accounts for about 40% of alcohol consumption while the rest is in the form of country liquor.

People drink at an earlier age than previously. The mean age of initiation of alcohol use has decreased from 23.36 years in 1950 to 1960 to 19.45 years in 1980 to 1990.

India has a large proportion of lifetime abstainers (89.6%). The female population is largely abstinent with 98.4% as lifetime abstainers. This makes India an attractive business proposition for the liquor industry.

Changing social norms, urbanization, increased availability, high intensity mass marketing and relaxation of overseas trade rules along with poor level of awareness related to alcohol has contributed to increased alcohol use.

Taxes generated from alcohol production and sale is the major source of revenue in most states (Rs.25,000 crores) and has been cited as a reason for permitting alcohol sale. Four states - Gujarat, Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland - have enforced prohibition.

Profile of clients in addiction treatment centers in 23 states (including states with prohibition) showed that alcohol was the first or second major drug of abuse in all except one state.

## The Real Cost of Alcohol



Large amount of revenue is generated from sale of alcohol. Yet, the hidden, cumulative costs of health care, absenteeism and reduced income levels related to heavy alcohol use are higher. These costs were estimated to be 60% more than the revenue generated in a study from Karnataka.

### Health and safety:

- Trauma, violence, organ system damage, various cancers, unsafe sexual practices, premature death and poor nutritional status of families with heavy drinking fathers are associated with alcohol use.
- Hazardous drinking was significantly associated with severe health problems such as head injuries and hospitalizations. 15 to 20% of traumatic brain injuries were related to alcohol use. Thirty seven percent of injuries in a public hospital was due to alcohol.
- Seventeen point six percent of psychiatric emergencies were caused by alcohol
- Thirty four percent of those who attempted suicide were abusing alcohol



### Work place:



- Twenty percent of absenteeism and 40% of accidents at work place are related to alcohol.
- Annual loss due to alcohol was estimated to be Rs. 70 000 to 80 000 million
- In a public enterprise, number of workplace accidents reduced to lesser than one fourth of the previous levels after alcoholism treatment.

### Family:

• Eighty five percent of men who were violent towards their wives were frequent or daily users of alcohol. More than half of the abusive incidents were under the influence of alcohol. An assessment showed that domestic violence reduced to one tenth of previous levels after alcoholism treatment.



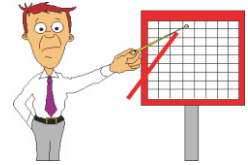
• 3 to 45 % of household expenditure is spent on alcohol. Use of alcohol increases indebtedness and reduces the ability to pay for food and education.

• Alcohol abuse leads to separations and divorces and causes emotional hardship to the family. The emotional trauma cannot be translated in terms of money but the impact it has on quality of lives is significant.



## What does IAPA aim to do?

Indian Alcohol Policy Alliance (IAPA) is a registered non-governmental organization started in 2004 to prevent alcohol related harm through policy intervention, advocacy and capacity building. IAPA is affiliated to Global Alcohol Policy Alliance and receives support from FORUT Campaign for Development and Solidarity, a Norwegian NGO in the field of development aid with special emphasis on alcohol and drugs as a cause of poverty and hindrance to development.



## IAPA provides a forum for advocacy to facilitate:

- Development of alcohol policy that addresses issues related to alcohol taxation, restrictions on production, number of sales outlets and hours of operation as well as ensuring stricter implementation of rules on age restrictions, drinking and driving laws and advertising
- Capacity building of various stakeholders to carry out prevention and intervention activities with the participation of various stakeholders including the government, non-government and community based organizations
- Education and information dissemination to create a high degree of public awareness and generate support for activities that will dissuade harmful alcohol use practices
- Research to highlight costs of alcohol use, monitor consumption trends and generate data for advocacy efforts to build political commitment and community support to reduce harmful impact of alcohol

## References

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