

Drinking 22 or more units of alcohol a week increases rates of hospital admission

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Men who drink 22 or more units of alcohol a week have a 20% higher rate of admissions into acute care hospitals than non-drinkers, researchers from the University of Glasgow have found.

The study also showed that drinking between eight and 14 units of [alcohol](#) a week increases the total number of days spent in hospital.

The research saw almost 6,000 working men, aged 35 to 64 during the early 1970s, from West and Central Scotland undergo a comprehensive [health](#) screen to check for underlying and potential health problems and questions about their weekly [alcohol consumption](#).

This was categorised as none; 1 to 7 units; 8 to 14; 15 to 21; 22 to 34; and 35 or more. Twenty one units is the government's recommended maximum weekly amount of alcohol for men.

The participants' health was then tracked for around 28 years, using national hospital activity data, focusing on heart and [respiratory diseases](#), stroke and alcohol related illness/conditions.

The results showed that men drinking over 22 units a week had a 20% higher rate of admissions into acute care hospitals than non-drinkers. But relatively low levels of alcohol consumption also gave rise to a higher number of bed days.

Drinkers of eight or more weekly units spent longer in hospital than non-drinkers, with length of stay progressively increasing the higher the weekly consumption. Those drinking the most chalked up a 58% higher use of beds.

The number of admissions for [stroke](#), and more time spent in hospital as a result, started with a weekly tally of 15 units, and progressively increased the more weekly units were consumed.

Those downing 22 or more weekly units had more admissions for respiratory illness, but they had the lowest rates of admission for [coronary heart disease](#). Non-drinkers had the highest rates of admission for this.

Men drinking 22 or more units a week had more admissions for a mental health problem, but non-drinkers had a higher rate of admissions for mental ill health than those who drank between one and 14 units a week.

Dr Carole Hart, Research Fellow in Public Health and Health Policy at the University of Glasgow, said: "This research illustrates the long-term impact that alcohol can have on health and health services and reinforces the case for moderation when it comes to alcohol consumption."

The authors conclude that drink has a "notable effect" on health service

use and therefore overall costs to the NHS. Their report is published in the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health.

Provided by University of Glasgow

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