NHS

Know Your Limits campaign activity pack

for community pharmacists and pharmacy staff

ALCOHOL
KNOW YOUR
LIMITS

SHOULD NOT REGULARLY EXCEED	
MEN	WOMEN
3-4 UNITS DAILY	2-3 UNITS DAILY

DOUBLE GIN AND TONIC: ABV 40% **2 UNITS**

Introduction

In May 2008, the government launched a new campaign to raise awareness of units and sensible drinking levels. Aimed at all drinkers, but specifically over 25s, the Know Your Limits Units campaign aims to increase understanding of the consequences of excessive drinking e.g. health/appearance, and provide the motivation to act on information and change behaviour. It forms part of 'Safe.Sensible.Social', the government's next steps for the Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy.

Community pharmacies and staff are key to ensuring that the national campaign messages are communicated to the general public. In England, most people's first – and sometimes only – contact with a pharmacist is through their local community pharmacy. Approximately 1.6m people walk into pharmacies everyday and 1.2m walk in for health related reasons. In the past six months three-quarters of people have visited a community pharmacy (Pharmacy in England: building on strengths – delivering the future, 2008).

We recognise that community pharmacists play an important role in delivering health messages to the public. Therefore, we would like to work with you to help deliver sensible drinking messages through local campaigns. This activity pack is designed to support you and your pharmacy staff in promoting awareness of the units messages. In the pack you will find resources and ideas to help you and your staff best support this important national campaign.

Did you know that nearly one in three men and one in five women drink more than the NHS recommended unit guidelines for alcohol?

Units campaign: the wider context

Alcohol misuse has become a serious issue in this country. Across England and Wales there are between 15,000 and 22,000 premature deaths associated with alcohol misuse each year. In 2007/08 in England, 6% of all NHS admissions (811,000 admissions in total) were alcohol related. Furthermore, alcohol misuse is calculated to cost the health service £2.7bn per annum.

Over the years alcoholic drinks have also become stronger and measures have become larger – people have gradually started to drink more without really knowing about the health risks of doing so. The Government's Know Your Limits units campaign is not telling people to stop drinking but to consider how much they drink.

The campaign aims to increase awareness of units so that people understand how much they are drinking in relation to the recommended guidelines (men should not regularly exceed 3-4 units daily and women should not regularly exceed 2-3 daily) and the potential health harms when exceeding these.

PINT OF LAGER: ABV 5.2% **3 UNITS**

How to get involved

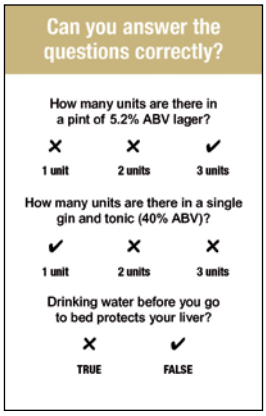
As frontline workers, you and your pharmacy staff are in a key position to promote awareness of the units messages to the general public. Many people who visit pharmacies spend short periods of time either waiting for prescriptions or picking up medicines which provides a good opportunity to engage customers in discussion about the units campaign.

If you are unsure about what activities you could organise please look at the following ideas for inspiration.

Scratchcards

Feedback from pharmacists has shown that engaging members of the public in discussions about alcohol can be difficult. To tackle this, visual prompts can be a useful tool to initiate discussion about an issue some people may find sensitive.

To help support you in starting these conversations, we've developed a scratchcard to use in your pharmacy. The scratchcard depicts popular drinks and corresponding units which members of the public must match up, and also a health related question. This resource can be displayed on your counter for members of the public to use while they are waiting for a prescription or seeking advice about another health issue.



This resource may prompt people to ask for advice or information about their drinking and provide a good opportunity to refer people to the 'Your drinking and you' leaflet. Both resources are free and available to order from **www.nhs.uk/alcoholstakeholders.** See the resource section in this pack for more details.

We would recommend that any advice given on alcohol consumption is quick, simple and clear to keep your audience engaged. For support in communicating campaign messages to the public please refer to the 'Guidance in delivering messages' section of this pack.

Engaging the media

Why not try approaching your local paper or radio station to set up a media partnership and get coverage for your Units campaign? You could partner up with a local GP and set up an expert advice phone in on local radio, or a regular column in a community magazine. Look for case studies to back up your story – your local alcohol advisory service may be able to help here. For information on how to write a press release about your campaign activity look at media release templates on **www.nhs.uk/alcoholstakeholders**

Working with local health professionals

Do you have a consultation area in your pharmacy? If so, you could use this space one day a week to provide alcohol consultations or advice sessions to the general public, with the support of a local GP, or representative from your local alcohol advisory centre. You could use campaign posters and leaflets to make this area a designated consultation space. Order some free Units campaign materials from **www.nhs.uk/stakeholders**

Additional activity

Events

Alongside running alcohol raising awareness activity inside your pharmacy, why not extend your campaign initiative by setting up a stand at a local community health event? Speak to the event organisers about getting a prime site – you can also order some of the Units campaign materials from **www.nhs.uk/alcoholstakeholders** to display on your stand.

You can run the stand yourself, but why not invite a local GP or nurse to support you and offer basic health advice to visitors? It's a good opportunity to get the general public talking to healthcare professionals and seeking further advice if necessary.

You could book a campaign banner to form the backdrop to your stand – see **www.nhs.uk/alcoholstakeholders** for more information. The scratchcards could also be a good way to attract passers by.

Don't forget

- Get in touch with the event organisers early – aim to make initial contact at least six weeks before the event
- See if you can get a mention in their event magazine / flyer to encourage visitors to come to your stand
- Offer a prize – maybe to the 100th person to come to your stand – as an incentive to encourage visitors

Guidance in delivering messages

Bringing up the subject of alcohol consumption and offering advice to the general public about their alcohol intake may be difficult. For many people alcohol consumption can be a sensitive issue. Please see below a step-by-step approach to support you and your staff in delivering the campaign messages simply and clearly.

1 As an ice-breaker, why not ask people to fill in the scratchcard and, if necessary, provide the advice below

2 Offer guidance on the NHS recommended daily units guidelines. See key facts for more information

3 Refer to the 'Your drinking and you' leaflet for information on how to drink less and reduce the risks. You can order free copies of this booklet from **www.nhs.uk/alcoholstakeholders** to handout when necessary

4 Offer advice on ways to cope, outlined in this pack

5 Direct people to the consumer units website **www.nhs.uk/units** for more information and tips about cutting down their alcohol consumption

Tips on how to cut down

- Switch to low alcohol lager
- Have a soft drink before each alcoholic drink
- Eat a meal before drinking
- Stick to single shots of spirits
- After work, play football, join the gym or go to the cinema instead of the pub

We recommend that any alcohol awareness raising activity and advice is introduced within the context of any other general health awareness activity you may already be running, e.g. blood pressure, healthy eating initiatives and alongside the existing Department of Health Educational Resource on Healthy Lifestyles.

If you are running a particular public health campaign you could also use this opportunity to pass on information about the units messages. Order some of the free resources, for example the posters and units counters, to support your activity. See the next section of this pack for details of materials available to you and how to place an order.

Key facts

- The NHS recommends that men should not regularly drink more than 3-4 units of alcohol daily and that women should not regularly drink more than 2-3 units daily
- 'Regularly' means every day or most days of the week (not just drinking at these levels once a week)
- Alcohol can be fattening. Adding three of four gin and tonics to your daily diet could make you put on 4lb in four weeks
- A large glass (250ml) of 12% ABV wine contains 3 units, a small double spirits measure (50ml) contains 2 units and a pint of 3.6% ABV bitter contains 2 units
- A 175ml glass of white wine has 130 calories – equivalent to a small bag of crisps
- Women who regularly exceed the recommended daily alcohol limit increase their risk of breast cancer by a third
- Likely benefits of cutting down on alcohol intake include better skin and feeling in better shape
- If men and women regularly exceed their daily alcohol limit they increase the risk of having a stroke through high blood pressure

Resources and information

FREE campaign resources

There are free resources for you to use to support your campaign activity including scratchcards, posters, leaflets, units counters and banner stands. To access all materials please visit the Know Your Limits campaign stakeholder website at **www.nhs.uk/alcoholstakeholders**

You can also download the units calculator for your pharmacy intranet from the stakeholder website.

Useful information

For further information about the units campaign visit:

- www.nhs.uk/units
- www.nhs.uk/alcoholstakeholders

Other sources of useful information:

- www.drinkaware.co.uk
- www.alcoholconcern.org.uk
- www.thedrinkdebate.org.uk

You can also download this guide from the Primary Care Contracting website: www.pcc.nhs.uk and via the Know Your Limits campaign stakeholder website: www.nhs.uk/alcoholstakeholders

Have you found this guide useful?

We welcome feedback on this guide. We would also like to hear about any communications activities you are currently running around alcohol and responsible drinking in your area, and any lessons learned in the process that other stakeholders might find helpful. Please email any ideas and experiences to us at **knowyourlimits@forster.co.uk**