

Media Release

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A hangover may be the least of your worries



(Smiths Falls) – Most people know that drinking too much alcohol can lead to some unwelcome symptoms the next day. But the trademark headache, upset stomach and fatigue you experience from a hangover may be the least of your concerns. **According to the World Health Organization, alcohol is the third most harmful risk factor for chronic disease (WHO, 2003).**

Research indicates that drinking more than 1 standard drink per day for women and 2 for men is associated with increased risks of high blood pressure, stroke and some types of cancer. As the amount of alcohol consumed increases, the risk of these conditions also increases. “We need to clear up misconceptions that people may have about alcohol and health,” says Rebecca Kavanagh, coordinator of the Smiths Falls FOCUS Community Coalition. **“The bottom line is that for healthy people who choose to drink, reducing intake will help reduce the risk for chronic disease and other alcohol-related problems.”**

This month, FOCUS communities across Ontario are launching a province-wide campaign to raise awareness about alcohol and chronic disease, including the risk of stroke. Drinking more than 1-2 drinks per day and binge drinking (more than 5 drinks at one time) can double the risk of ischemic stroke and increase the risk of hemorrhagic stroke two to three times. Alcohol use at these levels increases the risk of stroke by raising the blood pressure and contributing to obesity.

So if you don’t drink, don’t start. But if you choose to drink alcohol on occasion, the best advice is to limit your intake to no more than one to two standard drinks a day. The weekly limit for women is nine drinks; for men, it’s 14. And remember, there are some situations where you should not drink at all (e.g., pregnancy, addiction, some chronic illnesses, driving).

The FOCUS Community Program is an initiative of the Ministry of Health Promotion and there are 22 FOCUS communities in the Province of Ontario. The overall goal of the program is to prevent problems, including injuries and chronic disease associated with alcohol and other drug use.

For more information on low-risk drinking call the Smiths Falls FOCUS Community Coalition at 613-283-2740.

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