

You always have a choice when it comes to alcohol – Rethink Your Drinking!

For the first time ever, Canada has one national set of low-risk alcohol drinking guidelines. These guidelines, intended for Canadians of legal drinking age who choose to drink alcohol, aim to provide consistent information across the country to help Canadians moderate their alcohol consumption and make informed choices. The new guidelines outline standard drinks sizes, limits for men and women, discuss when the limit is zero, and provide healthy alternatives and tips to decrease health risks.

When it comes to alcohol, drinking is a personal choice, and the majority of people drink responsibly. We're not asking you to stop drinking ... instead we want you to Rethink Your Drinking, and gradually reduce the amount of alcohol you consume as part of a healthy lifestyle. If you choose to drink, these guidelines can help you decide when, where, why and how.

Remember during the holidays that when it comes to alcohol...choice matters. The Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines can help you plan ahead when you are drinking by providing safe drinking tips and times when zero is the limit. "Choice matters" is an important topic because of the way alcohol impairs our judgment and reaction time.

Did you know it can take 3 hours to remove alcohol from your body from just 2 drinks? During the holidays, and at all times it is important to remember that, according to the Ministry of Transportation, even small amounts of alcohol affect your brain, and it is hard to assess how impaired you might be.

Plan ahead; choose not to drive if you are drinking.

When are those times when zero is the limit? The guidelines recommend zero is the limit when you are:

- Driving a vehicle,
- Doing any kind of physical activity,
- Responsible for the safety of others
- Making important decisions.
- Taking medication or other drugs that interact with alcohol (such as energy drinks)
- Living with mental or physical health problems

Planning to become pregnant and during pregnancy or breastfeeding are also times when no alcohol is the best choice.

During the holidays, you can choose many delicious alternative drinks to alcoholic beverages. Check out the mocktail recipes on our website for just a few ideas that taste great and are good for you!

For more information on how to **Rethink your Drinking**, please visit our website: www.healthunit.org or call the Health ACTION Line at 1-800-660-5853. Like our facebook page for important public health updates. Follow @areyousafe for information on how alcohol affects your sexual health.

References:

1. Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse. (2011). Canada's Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines. Referenced from: <http://www.rethinkyourdrinking.ca/guidelines.php>
2. Ministry of Transportation Ontario. (2010). Impaired Driving. Retrieved from <http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/safety/impaired/fact-sheet.shtml>

-30-

Contact:

Bonnie Schnittker, Public Health Nurse, 613-283-2740 x 2106 or 1-800-660-5853

Or

Susan Healey, Communications co-ordinator, 613-802-0550