

Beat: Health

Alcohol causes 3.3 million deaths worldwide annually, WHO says

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USPA News - An estimated 3.3 million deaths worldwide in 2012, or about one death every ten seconds, were due to the excessive use of alcohol, according to a new report released by the World Health Organization (WHO) on Monday, urging governments to take more action. The report, titled the "Global status report on alcohol and health 2014," which is based on figures from 194 WHO member states, details the consumption of alcohol and measures taken by governments.

It shows that approximately 7.6 percent of men's deaths and 4 percent of women's deaths are due to excessive alcohol consumption. European countries are said to be the largest consumers of alcohol per capita, although increases have been reported in the South-East Asia and the Western Pacific regions due to increased wealth. Russian men drink the most with an average of 32 liters (8.4 U.S. gallons) of pure alcohol a year, the report found. "We found that worldwide about 16 percent of drinkers engage in heavy episodic drinking - often referred to as 'binge-drinking' - which is the most harmful to health," explained Dr Shekhar Saxena, Director for Mental Health and Substance Abuse at the World Health Organization. Some countries are now strengthening procedures and measures to reduce the number of deaths caused by alcohol, but the WHO has called for more action. Possible measures by governments include the increase of taxes on alcohol, limiting the availability of alcohol by raising the age limit, and regulating the marketing of alcoholic beverages. "More needs to be done to protect populations from the negative health consequences of alcohol consumption," said Dr Oleg Chestnov, WHO Assistant Director-General for Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health. "The report clearly shows that there is no room for complacency when it comes to reducing the harmful use of alcohol." On average globally, people aged 15 years or older drink 6.2 liters (1.6 U.S. gallons) of pure alcohol per year. However, as less than half the world's population - 38.3 percent - actually drinks alcohol, those who do drink consume on average 17 liters (4.5 U.S. gallons) of pure alcohol annually. Alcohol consumption can not only lead to dependence but also increases people's risk of developing more than 200 diseases, including liver cirrhosis and some cancers, according to the international health body. In addition, excessive drinking can also lead to violence and injuries.

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