

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR HEALTH AND CLINICAL EXCELLENCE

SCOPE**1 Guideline title**

The management of alcohol use disorders in adults and young people

1.1 Short title

Alcohol use disorders (management)

2 Background

- a) The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence ('NICE' or 'the Institute') has commissioned the National Collaborating Centre for Chronic Conditions to develop a clinical guideline on the management of alcohol use disorders in adults and adolescents for use in the NHS in England and Wales. This follows referral of the topic by the Department of Health (see appendix). The guideline will provide recommendations for good practice that are based on the best available evidence of clinical and cost effectiveness.
- b) The Institute's clinical guidelines support the implementation of National Service Frameworks (NSFs) in those aspects of care for which a Framework has been published. The statements in each NSF reflect the evidence that was used at the time the Framework was prepared. The clinical guidelines and technology appraisals published by the Institute after an NSF has been issued have the effect of updating the Framework.
- c) NICE clinical guidelines support the role of healthcare professionals in providing care in partnership with patients, taking account of their individual needs and preferences, and ensuring that patients (and their carers and families, if appropriate) can make informed decisions about their care and treatment.

3 Clinical need for the guideline

- a) Government guidelines on alcohol use suggest that women should not regularly exceed three units per day and men four units per day. There is no national consensus on safe and sensible levels of drinking in adolescents (government guidance is expected in 2008).
- b) The term alcohol use disorders encompasses physical, mental and behavioural conditions associated with alcohol use. Health problems can be related to either heavy alcohol use over a relatively short period of time (for example, intoxication) or the long term use of alcohol (for example, cirrhosis of the liver). Health problems are either alcohol-specific or alcohol-attributable. Alcohol-specific conditions are those that are wholly related to alcohol (for example, alcoholic liver disease). Alcohol-attributable conditions are defined as alcohol-specific conditions plus conditions that are caused by alcohol in some, but not all, cases (for example, unintentional injury)
- c) The Department of Health's Alcohol Needs Assessment Research Project identifies three categories of alcohol use disorders.
 - Hazardous drinking: people drinking above recognised 'sensible' levels but not yet experiencing harm.
 - Harmful drinking: people drinking above 'sensible' levels and experiencing harm.
 - Alcohol dependence: people drinking above 'sensible' levels and experiencing harm and symptoms of dependence.
- d) In addition, the term 'binge drinking' refers to people who drink more than double the daily recognised sensible levels in any one day.
- e) In 2005, an estimated 1.55 million people in England were classified as 'harmful' drinkers and further 6.3 million as 'hazardous' drinkers.

- f) In 2005, the rate of alcohol-specific mortality in people younger than 75 was 12.5 in 100,000 for men and 5.7 in 100,000 for women.
- g) The total cost to the NHS of alcohol use disorders is estimated at £1.7 billion each year.
- h) In 2005–6, the numbers of alcohol-specific hospital admissions in the UK were 339.7 per 100,000 men and 161.1 per 100,000 women. The number of alcohol-attributable admissions were 909.0 per 100,000 men and 510.4 per 100,000 women .
- i) In 2006, 21% of young people aged 11 to 15 who had drunk alcohol in the previous week consumed an average of 11.4 units. Drinking prevalence increases with age: 3% of 11 year olds had drunk alcohol in the previous week compared with 41% of 15 year olds. Among children younger than 16 there were 5280 hospital admissions in 2005–6 with either a primary or secondary diagnosis specifically related to alcohol.
- j) Binge drinking in young people is associated with alcohol use disorders in later life.

4 The guideline

- a) The guideline development process is described in detail in two publications that are available from the NICE website (see 'Further information'). 'The guideline development process: an overview for stakeholders, the public and the NHS' describes how organisations can become involved in the development of a guideline. 'The guidelines manual' provides advice on the technical aspects of guideline development.
- b) This document is the scope. It defines exactly what this guideline will (and will not) examine, and what the guideline developers will

consider. The scope is based on the referral from the Department of Health (see appendix).

- c) The areas that will be addressed by the guideline are described in the following sections.

4.1 Population

4.1.1 Groups that will be covered

- a) Adults and young people (10 years and older) who have any alcohol use disorder (excluding those covered in section 4.1.2).

4.1.2 Groups that will not be covered

- b) Women who are pregnant.
- c) People with comorbidities other than alcohol use disorders. For example, drug misuse disorders or hepatitis C.
- d) Children younger than 10 years.
- e) Adults and young people with psychological, emotional and social problems associated with alcohol.
- f) People with disorders of the central nervous system (including Wernicke's encephalopathy and Korsakoff's syndrome) and those with impairments of cognition (these will be covered by the NICE clinical guidance on alcohol dependence and related brain damage).
- g) People with acute alcohol withdrawal who do not require urgent medical management, for example people undergoing detoxification who experience mild to moderate alcohol withdrawal symptoms (this will be covered by the NICE clinical guideline on alcohol dependence and related brain damage).

4.2 *Healthcare setting*

- a) Primary and secondary NHS healthcare settings, including referral to tertiary care.

4.3 *Clinical management*

- a) The assessment and medical management of conditions or chronic conditions where alcohol is a major contributory cause:
- acute alcohol withdrawal requiring urgent or emergency medical management, including delirium tremens
 - liver damage, including hepatitis and cirrhosis
 - acute and chronic pancreatitis.
- b) The Guideline Development Group will consider making recommendations on the principal complementary and alternative interventions or approaches to care relevant to the guideline topic.
- c) The Guideline Development Group will take reasonable steps to identify ineffective interventions and approaches to care. If robust and credible recommendations for re-positioning the intervention for optimal use, or changing the approach to care to make more efficient use of resources, can be made, they will be clearly stated. If the resources released are substantial, consideration will be given to listing such recommendations in the 'Key priorities for implementation' section of the guideline.

4.4 *Status*

4.4.1 *Scope*

This is the consultation draft of the scope. The consultation period is 4 April to 2 May 2008.

Related NICE guidance

Published

Interventions in schools to prevent and reduce alcohol use among children and young people. NICE public health guidance 7 (2007). Available from www.nice.org.uk/guidance/PH007

Community-based interventions to reduce substance misuse among vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people. NICE public health intervention guidance 4 (2007) www.nice.org.uk/guidance/PHI004

In development

Alcohol use disorders: the prevention and early identification of alcohol use disorders in adults and adolescents. NICE public health guidance. (Publication expected March 2010.)

Alcohol dependence: the management of alcohol dependence and related brain damage. NICE clinical guideline. (Publication date to be confirmed.)

4.4.2 Guideline

The development of the guideline recommendations will begin in July 2008.

5 Further information

Information on the guideline development process is provided in:

- 'The guideline development process: an overview for stakeholders, the public and the NHS'
- 'The guidelines manual'.

These booklets are available as PDF files from the NICE website (www.nice.org.uk/guidelinesmanual). Information on the progress of the guideline will also be available from the website.

Appendix: Referral from the Department of Health

The Department of Health asked NICE:

'To produce combined public health and clinical guidance on management of alcohol use disorders in adults and adolescents.'