

Summary of the NCEPOD report

The NCEPOD report highlighted many missed opportunities in the care of patients with who died with a diagnosis of alcohol-related liver disease (ARLD).

The majority of patients included had been to hospital at least once in the two years prior to the admission when they died but not enough was done about their harmful drinking at that time. There was a failure to screen adequately for harmful use of alcohol and even when this was identified, patients were not referred for support.

When patients were admitted with signs and symptoms of serious liver damage, there were opportunities to improve their care by doing simple things such as optimising fluid management and screening for or treating sepsis. These were often missed.

Review by a specialist doctor was often delayed and sometimes did not happen at all. When organ failure occurred and patients needed more intensive care, again the additional treatment that was needed was often not given.

The findings of this report should be taken as an opportunity to organise the services for and improve the assessment of this group of patients.



*National Confidential
Enquiry into Patient
Outcome and Death*

Alcohol-related liver disease



NCEPOD

[HTTP://WWW.NCEPOD.ORG.UK/REPORTS.HTM](http://www.ncepod.org.uk/reports.htm)

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*Improving the quality of
medical and surgical care*

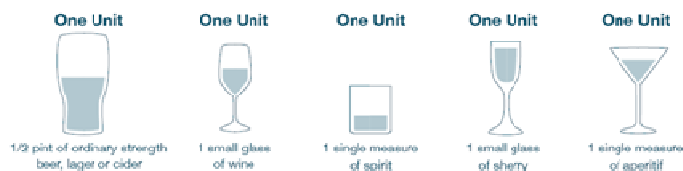
Alcohol-related liver disease - ARLD

Alcohol-related liver disease is a disease of the young - whilst mortality from liver disease, has risen steadily, the average age of death is only 59 years and is falling year on year. This is in contrast to other major causes of death such as heart and lung disease or stroke where the average age of death is over 80 years and is rising due to improved medical intervention.

Regularly drinking too much can increase your chances of **damaging your liver**. There aren't many warning signs of liver damage, a problem might only be discovered when it's very serious. The cases included in the NCEPOD report were all patients who came into hospital and died from alcohol-related liver disease, 25% of whom went to hospital for the first time.

A 27 year old patient was admitted with jaundice and a swollen abdomen. The patient had developed diarrhoea 2 weeks previously. The patient had a history of excessive drinking but had stopped 4 weeks prior to admission. They had no previous hospital admissions related to alcohol. On examination the patient had a tender enlarged liver. Their condition got worse and the following night, 13 hours after admission; the patient had a seizure and became very agitated. The patient died 3 days after their admission to hospital.

What is a unit?



What are the recommended safe limits of alcohol?

Men should drink no more than 21 units of alcohol per week, no more than 4 units in any one day, and have at least two alcohol-free days a week.

Women should drink no more than 14 units of alcohol per week, no more than 3 units in any one day, and have at least two alcohol-free days a week.

Pregnant women. Advice from the Department of Health states that ... "pregnant women or women trying to conceive should not drink alcohol at all. If they do choose to drink, to minimise the risk to the baby, they should not drink more than 1-2 units of alcohol once or twice a week and should not get drunk".

Help with alcohol and drinking

Alcoholics Anonymous
Telephone 0845 769 7555
Email: helpline@alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk
www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk

Al-Anon Family Groups UK & Eire
www.al-anonuk.org.uk
Telephone 020 7403 0888
Northern Ireland 02890 682368

Alcohol Concern
www.alcoholconcern.org.uk

The British Liver Trust
www.britishlivertrust.org.uk/home/support.aspx
Telephone 0800 652 7330

Drink aware
www.drinkaware.co.uk

Wales Drug and Alcohol Helpline
Cyffuriau ac Alcohol Cymru dan247.org.uk
Telephone 0808 808 2234

Northern Ireland: Addiction NI
addictionni.com
Telephone 02890 664434

Drinkline is the national alcohol helpline.
Telephone 0800 917 8282 (weekdays 9am – 8pm, weekends 11am – 4pm).

Addaction
www.addaction.org.uk
Telephone 020 7251 5860

Adfam
www.adfam.org.uk

The National Association for Children of Alcoholics
www.nacoa.org.uk
Telephone 0800 358 3456