



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang
Consumers Association of Penang
檳城消費人協會 பினாங்கு பயனீட்டாளர் சங்கம்

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Press Statement

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CAP: Refrain from taking alcoholic drinks

The Consumers Association of Penang, (CAP) calls on consumers to refrain from taking alcoholic drinks. This is in view of the statement by the World Health Organisation (WHO) which says that **No amount of alcohol is safe to drink**. Alcohol consumption is associated with the risks of cancer and other health conditions.

The United Nations health body says alcohol is a toxic, psychoactive, and dependence-producing substance and a Group 1 carcinogen that is causally linked to seven types of cancer, including oesophagus, liver, colorectal, and breast cancers.

Besides cancer, consuming a higher volume of alcohol may increase the risk of non-communicable diseases such as coronary heart disease and intentional injury. Alcohol also causes harm to developing fetuses, and psychiatric morbidity; including depression, anxiety and suicide.

According to the WHO statement published in *The Lancet Public Health*. "Alcohol consumption is associated with 740,000 new cancer cases each year globally. The team said some studies have suggested that light alcohol consumption could have a small protective effect but there is no evidence to that claim.

As such, it was concluded that no safe amount of alcohol consumption for cancers and health could be established, Alcohol use is among the leading risk factors for premature mortality and disability because of its causal relationship with multiple health conditions.

According to WHO, there is no evidence to indicate the existence of a particular threshold at which the carcinogenic effects of alcohol start to manifest in the human body. The risk of developing alcohol-related diseases is greatest for those who consume large amounts in a small period of time. Excessive alcohol consumption can permanently damage the liver and cause cancer.

In Malaysia, the World Health Organization reports that over 80% of the Malaysian population is a lifetime abstainer, while the Confederation of Malaysian Brewers estimates there are more than 3 million drinking population in the country.

For those who do drink, beer is by far the most popular drink in Malaysia making up 76% of the total consumption, spirits make up 22% and wine just 2%.

For those who cannot afford beer, there are a number of locally produced traditional alcoholic beverages:

Arak is an alcoholic drink made by the distillation of the juice of the coconut palm tree.

Toddy is an alcoholic drink made by fermentation of the sap from a coconut palm. It is white and sweet with a characteristic flavour. It has an alcohol content of between 4% and 6% and a shelf life of only 24 hours.

Samsu is a locally distilled potent spirit with an alcohol content of between 37% and 70%. There are over 150 brands of samsu available in the market. The majority of alcohol consumers among the rural poor are samsu drinkers.

Tuak (or duak/tapai) is a traditional homemade rice wine popular with indigenous people in Sabah and Sarawak at harvest festivals and social events.

In view of the health hazards associated with alcohol, CAP calls on consumers to refrain from taking alcoholic drinks.

For those celebrating Chinese New Year, it is advisable not to serve alcoholic drinks. As an alternative, non-alcoholic drinks could be served at the reunion dinner and at the ritual of shouting “Yam Seng”.

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