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| Addictions Foundation of Manitoba | Position #: | PP - 446 |
| | Position: | Low-Risk Drinking |
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LOW-RISK DRINKING

POSITION STATEMENT

In conjunction with the following guidelines pertaining to low-risk drinking for the adult population, up to two drinks may be consumed on drinking days without meaningful risk of adverse long and short term effects on health; and that no more than this is required to achieve the protective effects for the cardiovascular system.

The AFM does, however, recognize that there are less risky ways to protect against heart disease, which include: quitting smoking, controlling blood pressure, exercising regularly and eating less fat and more fruits and vegetables. There are also special populations who should not use alcohol or who should limit their use to less than the maximum amounts.

CONTEXT

AFM's position and guidelines associated with Low-Risk Drinking are intended to assist the general public to understand the patterns and levels of alcohol consumption related both to the lowest risk of adverse effects and to the maximum benefits derived from alcohol's protective effect against heart disease.

The Position and accompanying Guidelines are based on current available research and medical evidence. Knowledge in this area will continue to advance. Thus, regular reviews are necessary to ensure that this position remains constant and valid.

GUIDELINES

Healthy people who are of drinking age can minimize the risk of alcohol-related problems such as health and social problems, injuries and alcohol dependence, by observing the following guidelines. These guidelines should be taken as a whole to ensure a low risk of alcohol problems. If a person exceeds the daily or weekly limits on a regular basis, there is an increased risk of problems. As well, these guidelines do not apply to some people, as outlined under special populations.

- Drink no more than two standard drinks on any day; limit your weekly intake to fourteen (14) standard drinks for men and nine (9) standard drinks for women. When this level is exceeded, take precautions to avoid injuries and other problems.

A standard drink is defined as one 12 oz bottle of beer (5% alcohol); one 5 oz glass of table wine (12% alcohol); one 1.2 oz shot of liquor (40% alcohol); or one 3 oz serving of fortified wine.

- Drink slowly to avoid intoxication, waiting at least one hour between drinks and taking alcohol with food and non-alcoholic beverages.
- If you abstain, do not start drinking alcohol for its protective effect against heart disease; there are less risky alternatives such as, quitting smoking, exercise and better nutrition.

- If you are seeking help for a drinking problem, follow the guidelines and advice of your counsellor or health professional.
- **Special Populations** - relating to people who should not use alcohol or who should limit their use to less than the guideline maximum amounts:
 - People with certain health problems, such as substance dependence, uncontrollable high blood pressure, liver disease or psychiatric illness.
 - People taking certain medications, such as sedatives, sleeping pills and pain killers.
 - People with a personal or family history of serious drinking problems.
 - Women who are pregnant, trying to conceive or breast-feeding.
 - People who are operating vehicles such as automobiles, motorcycles, boats, snowmobiles, all terrain vehicles or bicycles.
 - People who need to be alert, for example, while working with machinery or dangerous equipment, while engaging in challenging physical activities or when responsible for the safety of others or public order.
 - People who are under any legal or other restriction on drinking, personally or because of the environment they are in.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

The rationale and benefits for adopting the Position and accompanying Guidelines on Low-Risk Drinking include:

- Provides simple, concrete answers to frequently asked questions about low risk drinking, eg. What is low-risk drinking? Is alcohol good for my heart, if so, how much? Are there specific guidelines on what amounts are considered low-risk?. If I don't drink all week, but I have fourteen all in one day, is that the same thing?, etc. etc.
- Assists people in reducing their alcohol use to a level that is no longer harmful to the health or social well-being of themselves or others.
- Provides a specific framework and guideline for AFM staff and other professionals who can help patients or clients to change behaviours.
- Puts into context emerging evidence on the beneficial effects of alcohol against heart disease, and eliminate the balance between beneficial and harmful effects of alcohol.
- Provides support for people who do not drink alcohol by pointing out that there are less risky alternatives to achieve a protective effect against heart disease.
- Emphasizes the differences between actual alcohol consumption and behaviours, such as drinking and driving, that can increase the risk of harm.
- Assists in heightening public awareness about alcohol use and alcohol problems
- Supports public policy on alcohol by promoting responsible drinking.
- Supports ongoing prevention and treatment initiatives (continuum of use).
- Can assist in reducing alcohol abuse and related economic and social costs.