



Toi Te Ora – Public Health Service is committed to improving and protecting the health of the communities in the Bay of Plenty and Lakes districts.

Position Statement – Alcohol*

Alcohol is a significant cause of disease, disability and social harm.
Toi Te Ora – Public Health Service supports strategies to reduce harm related to alcohol consumption and especially excessive alcohol consumption.

Alcohol use is deeply embedded in many societies including New Zealand. Significant widespread change will be required if we are to successfully address harm from alcohol consumption.

Decreased alcohol consumption would result in a healthier New Zealand population and lead to lower healthcare costs. Any consumption of alcohol has potential harmful effects, particularly for vulnerable populations such as young people and unborn children. Excessive use comes at a high cost through increased risk of accidental injury, violence, motor vehicle crashes, cancer, mental health problems, alcohol addiction, and other alcohol-related disorders.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) describes well-researched strategies for reducing alcohol consumption and related risks:

- Increasing the price of alcohol
- Implementing and enforcing legal drinking ages for the purchase and consumption of alcohol
- Setting maximum blood alcohol concentrations for drivers and enforcing them with random breath testing and roadside check points
- Reducing availability and accessibility of alcohol through a range of measures including a reduction in the amount of marketing and advertising.

Additionally, the social and physical context considerably affects the potential for harm from intoxication. Strategies are needed that protect the drinker by altering the drinking environment. Strategies should include improved community input into local alcohol licensing decisions and support for community strategies addressing local alcohol issues.

The priority population groups that experience disproportionate alcohol-related harm compared with the rest of the population are youth, Maori, Pacific Peoples and pregnant women. Harm reduction strategies need to be tailored for these groups.

While the health sector can make a strong impact on decreasing alcohol-related harm, sustainable strategies to change the New Zealand drinking culture require a range of actions addressing demand and supply and minimising risks associated with alcohol consumption.

Toi Te Ora – Public Health Service advocates and supports the following:

- Research and evaluation of effective population-based strategies and measures that successfully reduce alcohol-related harm
- Reducing health inequalities associated with alcohol consumption, including support of community groups and healthcare providers that specifically address alcohol-related harm in high-risk populations
- The continued monitoring of licensed premises, the enforcement of the Sale of Liquor Act 1989, providing submissions on alcohol issues to regional councils and local and central government, and supporting community input into local alcohol licensing decisions and community actions to reduce alcohol-related risks
- National strategies to prevent or delay the uptake of alcohol consumption and to reduce excessive drinking by adults and young people
- The WHO strategies for reducing alcohol consumption and related risks.

References and further information

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*This statement aligns with the Bay of Plenty District Health Board's statement and provides the public health perspective on this issue.

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