



BIRMINGHAM DRUG AND ALCOHOL ACTION TEAM NEWS RELEASE

Date: 15th October 2009

ALCOHOL AWARENESS WEEK: TIME TO RETHINK YOUR DRINK?

People in Birmingham are being urged to ‘rethink your drink’ during Alcohol Awareness Week, which begins on Monday 19th October.

Birmingham Drug & Alcohol Action Team (BDAAT) is supporting the Government’s Know Your Limits campaign, which is encouraging people across the country to take stock of how much they are drinking by keeping a drink diary for the week.

The Birmingham Drug and Alcohol Action Team are working together with The A-Team, and Aquarius, two of Birmingham’s Alcohol Service Providers to hold an alcohol awareness stall at Edgbaston Street Markets, Birmingham (near the Bull Ring shopping centre) on Friday 23rd October. The stall will be a great opportunity to engage with local residents about their alcohol intake, providing alcohol screening along with guidance leaflets aimed at adults, young people and parents. Health lifestyle messages on how to reduce your drinking will be promoted, and unit calculators will be handed out to people to provide a better understanding around what units are.

BDAAT, The A–Team and Aquarius will be encouraging people to keep a simple drink diary for a week to learn whether their drinking could be putting them at risk.

Nicki King, Service Manager for The A-Team said, “This is a fantastic chance to encourage people to think about how much they are drinking, It’s so easy to get into a routine of regular drinking which is above the lower-risk guidelines, without realising you might be putting your health at risk. For example, if a man regularly drinks a couple of pints of beer most days of the week, he is drinking above the lower-risk guidelines.”

“Keeping a drink diary for a week is easy, and can really make you stop and think about whether you ought to be cutting back – and there’s no better time than Alcohol Awareness Week to give it a go.”

BDDAT also want to warn Birmingham residents of the dangers of drinking if you knowingly have high blood pressure, and, alongside that, encourage people to get their blood pressure checked if they aren't sure what it is - that way they know to moderate their alcohol intake if it's high. Several studies have found that regularly drinking alcohol above the recommended safe limits can have a significant influence on raising blood pressure levels.

To help support this campaign BDAAT have set up a pressure station at the Alcohol Awareness stall and will be running free blood pressure checks.

Max Vaughan, BDAAT Alcohol Commissioning Manager, said, “Drinking excessive amounts of alcohol can raise blood pressure to unhealthy levels which can have serious consequences on your general health. By providing free blood pressure checks we hope to raise awareness to those who may have high blood pressure, informing them that by drinking alcohol in moderation and keeping within the recommended safe limits, you are helping to ensure your blood pressure is maintained at a healthy level.”

In conjunction with this, BDAAT have launched a Birmingham wide radio campaign with Heart FM, urging people to lower their alcohol intake to help sustain a healthy blood pressure. The radio ad will guide anyone concerned about their alcohol consumption to the BDAAT 0800 helpline number* where information and advice about the alcohol services within Birmingham will be provided.

Birmingham Drug and Alcohol Action Team are inviting all Birmingham residents to visit the Alcohol Awareness stall to have your blood pressure checked for free at Edgbaston Street Markets, Birmingham (near the Bull Ring shopping centre) on Friday 23rd October from 10am until 4pm.

*For information and advice about alcohol services in Birmingham call
0800 073 0817

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Notes to Editors

1. Please contact Christie Galloway on 0121 465 4942 or email Christie.galloway@hobtpct.nhs.uk for further information
2. The Birmingham Drug and Alcohol Action Team is part of the Safer Birmingham Partnership, a multi-agency organisation that includes West Midlands Police, Birmingham City Council, West Midlands Fire Service, Birmingham Primary Care Trusts, Third Sector Assembly, Probation Service and a range of other agencies. Safer Birmingham Partnership ensures the delivery of a range of community safety activity which is aimed at making Birmingham even safer.
3. For media enquiries only about the Know Your Limits campaign, please contact the press office on 020 7839 4321 or email media@knowyourlimits.co.uk
4. Know Your Limits is a joint Department of Health and Home Office initiative in England, launched in October 2006. The campaign encourages people to drink responsibly and to recognise what their limits are when it comes to alcohol. For more information, visit www.nhs.uk/units.