

## **Booze toll of baby boomers: Their alcohol abuse costs NHS £825m**

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- **The cost of drink-related hospital admissions for baby boomers is ten times higher than for 16-24 year olds**

By Jenny Hope

Alcohol-related health costs in England reveals that the 55-74 age band imposes a greater burden on the state through drinking than any other age group. This picture is posed by a model

Baby boomers take up the lion's share of NHS spending on alcohol abuse.

The first ever map of alcohol-related health costs in England reveals that the 55-74 age band imposes a greater burden on the state than any other age group.

The cost of drink-related hospital admissions among baby boomers is ten times higher than it is for 16-24 year olds. Inpatient care for baby boomers cost £825million in 2010/11 against £64million for the under 25s, £560million for 25-54 year olds and £544million on over 75s.

The total bill was £1.99billion – two thirds of it down to men.

The report from Alcohol Concern, an independent campaign group, provides the first complete picture of alcohol-related health costs across England by local authority.

Its chief executive Eric Appleby said: 'It is the common perception that young people are responsible for the increasing cost of alcohol misuse, but our findings show that in reality this is not the case.

'It is the middle aged, and often middle class drinker, regularly drinking above recommended limits, who are actually requiring complex and expensive NHS care.

'Alcohol costs the NHS and society billions of pounds every year. Thousands of people die because of it and millions more have their lives ruined by it.

'This is a stark picture and it's a problem for every one of us.'

The Department of Health is consulting on changes to the way in which alcohol-related hospital admissions are recorded. It is likely it will result in only primary diagnoses – the main health problem – being counted and not health problems in which alcohol may have played a part.

More than ten million people are drinking more than the Government's recommended limits, unaware of the health problems that they are storing up, according to experts.

Findings: The cost of drink-related hospital admissions among baby boomers is ten times higher than it is for 16-24 year olds. This picture is posed by models

Sir Ian Gilmore, of the British Society of Gastroenterology, said: 'It is the unwitting chronic middle-aged drinkers who are taking serious risks with their health.

'They present in hospital with conditions attributable to their alcohol consumption such as stroke, heart disease, cancer and liver disease.

People simply do not realise that chronic drinking significantly increases their chances of suffering health problems. Indeed it is these people who cost the NHS the most.'

Siobhan McCann, of Drink aware, an alcohol education charity, said: 'These statistics are a stark reminder of the long-term health impact of regularly drinking over the government's guidelines.

'People in their 30s and 40s who we know are drinking more and more frequently than under 25s, are likely to be a burden on local NHS services in the future.

'At any age, there are adverse health impacts of drinking above the government's guidelines, but in later life your likelihood of developing health problems goes up.

Drinking to excess increases your risk of getting diseases including cancer, heart and liver disease – which has no warning signs.'

The picture across all local authorities was captured in the Alcohol Harm Map, produced by Alcohol Concern, in partnership with Lundbeck.

It found that eight times as many 55 to 74 year olds (454,317) were admitted as inpatients compared with 16 to 24 year olds (54,682).