

Rising numbers of people going to hospital with liver problems caused by alcoholism as organ donations soar by a third

- **An extra 1,000 patients are treated each year for alcohol-related liver damage**
- **14,886 hospital admissions in 2009/10; 15,858 in 2010/11; 16,865 in 2011/12**

By Fiona Macrae Science Correspondent

Too much fun: Young drinkers are at risk

Growing numbers of 'everyday drinkers' are being admitted to hospital with liver disease – including many middle-aged, middle-class women.

Official figures show an extra 1,000 patients are treated each year for alcohol-related liver damage, many of whom would not usually be regarded as alcoholics.

Experts say most new cases are normal people unwittingly drinking too much, such as women who enjoy a bottle of wine a day, or successful businessmen who have working lunches. Over time, drinking alcohol day in day out leads to the liver becoming fatty, inflamed and, in the most serious cases, incurably scarred.

The data reveals that alcohol-related liver disease accounted for 14,886 admissions in hospitals in England in 2009/10, 15,858 in 2010/11 and 16,865 during 2011/12.

And the problem is not limited to those with decades of drinking under their belt.

Figures released last month showed that alcohol-related liver damage is becoming increasingly common in the under-30s, with the number of hospital admissions in this age group more than doubling between 2002 and 2012. The charity Alcohol Concern described the statistics as 'terrifying'.

Chief executive Eric Appleby said: 'We're seeing an increase in alcohol-related liver disease across both sexes, in every age group, in every region of the country.'

'It's particularly sad to see the number of young people with this awful disease more than doubling.'

'We have to start taking this seriously. If this was any other illness, immediate action would be taken to halt this.'

'So we call on the Department of Health to outline what action it intends to take.'



Drink up: Official figures show an extra 1,000 patients are treated each year for alcohol-related liver damage

He added that there needed to be 'an environment where alcohol isn't cheaper than water and available on every corner'.

Andrew Langford, of the British Liver Trust, said the bulk of people being treated would not be seen by others as alcoholics.

He added: 'More people are drinking every day and not giving their livers a rest.'



Public health: Labour MP, Diane Abbott obtained the figures in a parliamentary question

The number of livers donated to people with alcohol-related liver disease has also risen – from 146 in 2009 to 197 in 2012.

Alcoholics are eligible for transplants but most centres insist they prove their commitment by remaining sober for several months first.

The British Liver Trust said it is very important to offer organs to anyone who needs them, but that the epidemic of alcoholic liver damage means 'far too many' people die while waiting for a transplant. Labour's public health spokesman Diane Abbott, who obtained the figures in a parliamentary question, said England was in the grip of a 'liver disease crisis' and that 'radical' measures were needed.