



Alcohol abuse in Britain could be costing the NHS up to £3 billion a year, representing 12% of the NHS's total spending on hospitals , according to a new report by the Royal College of Physicians.

Campaigners say that the knock on effect of alcoholism is more likely costing the NHS closer to £6 billion a year when you take into account premature deaths, alcohol related crimes and alcohol induced and related accidents.

"Alcohol is an issue which needs to be tackled on all fronts, especially by changing attitudes to alcohol-related problems across the NHS." Professor Ian Gilmore, chairman of the RCP, told the [Daily Mail](#).

"If we start at the sharp end of hospital admissions with detection and simple intervention for patients who are starting to drink dangerously, there is good evidence that we can make a real difference." he said.

The study showed that 15% of women and 27% of men are drinking more than the weekly recommended amounts.

Teenage drinking was found to be on the increase with more than 50% of 14-15yr olds admitted to drinking the week before.

"We agree with the Royal College of Physicians' findings on the importance of brief interventions" said a spokeswoman for the Department of Health.

"These can be administered in primary and secondary care through social services and through the criminal justice system and there's sound evidence to demonstrate their effectiveness.

"A consultation paper to tackle a national strategy on alcohol misuse which will be published shortly will consider ways in which barriers can be broken down."

However the spokeswoman disputed that alcohol abuse is costing the NHS £3 billion saying that they "recognise that alcohol misuse places a heavy burden on all of us" and that it is actually "estimated that alcohol misuse costs £207 million to the NHS."

It is not only the NHS suffering from the effects of alcoholism. A government report conducted by Number 10's Strategy Unit estimates that the true cost of alcohol abuse costs Britain at least £20 billion a year.

Around 17 million working days are lost each year due to alcohol related illnesses or hangovers which is costing employers £6.4 billion.

"Sixteen-year-olds are drinking twice as much as they did 10 years ago and a lot more than their European peers," said a government spokesman.

"I think young people will say to you that we get lots of information about drugs but perhaps we don't get as much information about alcohol as we really need to get," Home Office minister Hazel Blears told BBC Radio 4's Today programme.

"We have got to try to get into a culture that the whole of our entertainment isn't just about alcohol. It should be about the theatre, about cinema, about bowling - about a range of things." She said.

The government report also estimated that the cost of clearing up alcohol-related crime is costing tax payers a further £7.3 billion a year.

The RCP report has called upon the government to speed up the publication of its strategy to reducing alcohol misuse in the UK.

"The Royal College's report is further proof that the Government needs to look at the full health, economic and social effects of alcohol misuse and devise a concerted strategy to tackle the problem." said Eric Appleby, director of Alcohol Concern.

Source: Daily Mail