

Communicating alcohol and health-related information

1. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide producers and packagers of alcoholic beverages with guidance on how to communicate alcohol and health-related information to consumers, across multiple channels. This guidance has been produced in consultation with the British Beer and Pub Association, the National Association of Cider Makers, the Scotch Whisky Association, and the Wine and Spirit Trade Association.

1.1 Background

The alcohol drinks industry has committed to ensure that key alcohol and health-related information is made available to consumers. The aim of this voluntary initiative is to increase consumers' awareness and understanding of units, low risk drinking guidelines and advice on drinking during pregnancy.

1.2 Scope of these guidelines

These guidelines supersede Portman Group's 2011 Labelling Guidelines. Things have moved on, not just the extent of health-related information available – the change in the drinking guidelines and the various proposals to provide nutritional and calorie information - but also technologically. We recognise that consumers now interact with product information across multiple channels and in different ways; and, with the widespread use of smartphones and increased connectivity, access is increasingly online.

In response to changing consumer behaviour, industry must adapt not only the information it provides, but also how and where information is made available: through apps, via websites, web-links, etc. These platforms have the capability of conveying accurate, comprehensive advice on responsible drinking and are not space restricted compared to the limitations of product packaging. These platforms are also more quickly and easily updated than labels. Furthermore, there is a danger that too much information on product packaging diminishes the impact and legibility of all information. While labels still play an important role in conveying key pieces of information, they are not the most versatile platform and should be used alongside other platforms.

Below we set out best practice guidelines on communicating alcohol and health-related information; starting with the minimum elements for product packaging¹, the Chief Medical Officers' Low Risk Drinking Guidelines 2016, and how to direct consumers online to find more information. We also provide

¹ Small drinks containers with a volume of 50ml or below are exempt from featuring this information on the grounds of practicality

suggestions for communicating via other platforms, as described above, in Appendix B, page 10). Producers can go beyond the recommendations set out in this guidance.

All the example icons used in this document are available to download from the Portman Group's website: www.portmangroup.org.uk, and we would encourage you to contact the Portman Group's Advisory Service for advice on how to use these icons.

1.3 Legal disclaimer

This guidance is supplementary to guidance² Defra has produced about the information that must be given on food products for them to comply with the European Food Information to Consumers Regulation No 1169/2011 (FIC). This Regulation has been introduced to the UK as the Food Information Regulations 2014 (FIR). It is the responsibility of all relevant companies within the supply chain to ensure product labels are compliant with the requirements of FIC and companies are urged to contact their trade association for sector-specific advice.

2. Presentation on primary packaging

2.1 Overall presentation for primary packaging

For the purposes of this guidance document information as a whole, and for each individual element, should:

- be clear, legible, indelible, displayed on the primary packaging; and, not be difficult for consumers to find;
- be grouped together. Companies are encouraged, though not required, to differentiate the information from other information on the packaging, for example by use of a box, spacing, background colour, etc);
- not appear on a part of the primary packaging that is dispensed with before or immediately when the product is opened; and
- not contain anything which serves to undermine the overall health messaging.

2.2 Minimum content for primary packaging

2.2.1 As a minimum, we recommend that producers include the following three elements on their primary packaging:

- I. Unit alcohol content per container (and optional per typical serve)

² Food Labelling: Giving food information to consumers. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/food-labelling-giving-food-information-to-consumers>

- II. Pregnancy logo/message
- III. Active signposting to Drinkaware.co.uk

An example label can be found in Appendix A, on page 7.

3. Further Presentational Information

3.1 Unit alcohol content

- 3.1.1 The container should state the number of units in the package and display them within an appropriate icon.
- 3.1.2 The number of units in the drink should be calculated by multiplying the volume of the drink (in ml) by the alcoholic strength by volume (ABV) and dividing the answer by 1000. (For example, the number of units in a 440ml can of beer with an ABV of 5% vol. is 2.2 units).
- 3.1.3 The number of units should be rounded to one decimal place. For example, 1.42 units becomes 1.4 and 2.65 units becomes 2.7.
- 3.1.4 The number of units should be calculated for the whole container rather than for a typical serving, even if it is a re-sealable, multi-serve container (for example, a bottle of spirit).
- 3.1.5 In the case of a multi-serve container (and this may include beer and cider containers above 500ml), companies are also encouraged to display the number of units per typical serving. For instance, the typical serving for wine could be taken as 125ml; 25ml for spirits and liqueurs and 284ml (½ pint) for beer.
- 3.1.6 If the unit alcohol content is optionally featured on the secondary packaging of retailed multi-packs, the individual container icon should be displayed, followed or prefixed by an indication of the number of containers within the pack.
- 3.1.7 Appendix A provides examples of icons of alcohol types, which can be obtained from the Portman Group.

3.2 Pregnancy message

- 3.2.1 The container should either display the agreed circular logo showing the silhouette of a pregnant woman holding a glass with a line struck across it; or, as an alternative to the logo, the following statement can be used '*it is safest not to drink alcohol when pregnant*'.
- 3.2.2 Companies can choose which colourway to use, as shown below in Appendix A, page 7.
- 3.2.3 There should be no variation to the above logo (except the colourway) or statement.

3.3 Drinkaware.co.uk

- 3.3.1 The container should state the website address of the independent charity, Drinkaware, as drinkaware.co.uk
- 3.3.2 Drinkaware.co.uk provides accessible and engaging information for consumers interested in all aspects of their drinking, and should be used as the primary source for all alcohol health-related information. The website communicates the full extent of the Chief Medical Officers' (CMO) Low Risk Drinking Guidelines³ (see section 3.6 below); and, in 2017 will feature an online searchable database of UK unit and calorie information in respect of Drinkaware-donor brands.
- 3.3.3 It is recommended that consumers should be actively directed to the website for further information. For example, if the drinking guidelines or other alcohol health-related information is not provided on the packaging, the packaging should signpost to where this information is hosted.
- 3.3.4 We recommend this should be presented as '*for further health information visit drinkaware.co.uk*'
- 3.3.5 Any company wishing to use the Drinkaware logo, 'drinkaware.co.uk'⁴, or refer to the Drinkaware website must obtain prior consent from Drinkaware by entering into a Trademark Licence Agreement; a licence cost is payable. More details available on: <https://resources.drinkaware.co.uk/downloads/our-logo>

3.4 Chief Medical Officers' Low Risk Drinking Guidelines 2016

- 3.4.1 The Chief Medical Officers' (CMOs') Guidelines on Low Risk Drinking were published in August 2016.
- 3.4.2 The guidelines replace the previous daily guidelines, with the same weekly guideline for men and women if drinking regularly, advice on single occasion drinking episodes, and a guideline on pregnancy and drinking.
- 3.4.3 Due to the length and complexity of the guidelines, the Department of Health (DH) has produced an additional document which provides suggestions for industry as to how key points from the Guidelines might be communicated to consumers. The document '*Communicating the*

³ UK Chief Medical Officers' Low Risk Drinking Guidelines:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/545937/UK_CMOs_report.pdf

⁴ Companies can no longer use the logo or refer to the url unless they sign a licence agreement

*UK Chief Medical Officers' low risk drinking guidelines*⁵, was published on Gov.uk on 24 March 2017.

- 3.4.4 As suggested in the DH document, companies choosing to replace the previous guidelines should do so with the following text: *'The UK Chief Medical Officers recommend adults do not regularly drink more than 14 units per week'*.

- 3.4.5 There should be no variation to this wording.

An example label can be found in Appendix A, on page 7.

3.5 Calorie Content

- 3.5.1 Some alcohol producers already provide calorie content either on the packaging or via an online platform. Provision of calorie information is subject to UK food information Regulations (FIR) and where provided must be displayed per 100ml. However, in addition it is also optional to provide calorie information per serve size. Producers are encouraged to contact their trade association for sector-specific advice.

3.6 Drink-driving message

- 3.6.1 The container may include a *'don't drink and drive'* logo or feature a statement to that effect; see Appendix A, page 9 for icon.

3.7 Responsibility statement

- 3.7.1 The container may include a statement encouraging responsible consumption such as *'Drink responsibly'*, *'Drink in moderation'*, *'Drink sensibly'* or *'Know your limits'*.
- 3.7.2 The brand name may be included in the responsibility statement (e.g. *'Please drink Brand X responsibly'*) provided this is not done in a way that might undermine the sentiment of the statement.

3.8 Age-restricted product

- 3.8.1 The container may include the logo to highlight that alcohol is an age-restricted product; see Appendix A, page 9 for icon.

⁵https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/602132/Communicating_2016_CMO_guidelines_Mar_17.pdf

4. Further advice

- 4.1 Companies are encouraged to contact the Portman Group's Advisory Service for a view as to whether any additional statements are suitable.
- 4.2 The following appendices present examples featuring the above information. All the example labels or individual icons can be downloaded from www.portmangroup.org.uk or available by contacting the Portman Group's Advisory Service at advice@portmangroup.org.uk

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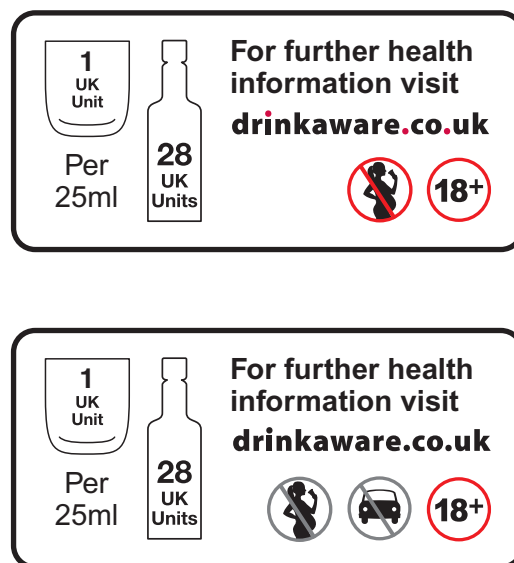
CONTENT FOR PACKAGING



Example label presenting the minimum elements on-pack with active signpost to Drinkaware.co.uk.



Example label featuring CMOs' Low Risk Drinking Guidelines.



Example labels featuring minimum elements and other icons.

PROTOTYPES OF UNIT LABELS

All calculations are based on typical container sizes.
The labels may state either “UNITS” or “UK UNITS”.

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| <p>700ml bottle of spirits (alc 40% vol)</p>  <p>28 UK Units</p> | <p>750ml bottle of table wine (alc 12.5% vol)</p>  <p>9.4 UK Units</p> | <p>750ml bottle of fortified wine (alc 20% vol)</p>  <p>15 UK Units</p> |
| <p>275ml bottle of beer/cider/RTD (alc 4.2% vol)</p>  <p>1.1 UK Units</p> | <p>330ml bottle of beer/cider/RTD (alc 4.2% vol)</p>  <p>1.4 UK Units</p> | <p>440ml can of beer/cider/RTD (alc 4.2% vol)</p>  <p>1.8 UK Units</p> |
| <p>multi-pack of 24 x 440ml cans of beer/cider/RTD (alc 4.2% vol)</p> <p>24 x</p>  <p>1.8 UK Units</p> | <p>(optional) 125ml glass of wine (alc 12.5% vol)</p>  <p>1.6 UK Units</p> <p>Per 125ml serving</p> | <p>(optional) 25ml glass of spirit (alc 40% vol)</p>  <p>1 UK Unit</p> <p>Per 25ml serving</p> |

The number of units has been calculated by multiplying the declared volume (in ml) by the declared alcoholic strength (ABV) and then dividing by 1000.



Prototype of pregnancy logo; companies can choose which one to use.



Example of don't drink and drive plus age restricted product logo.

PRESENTATION VIA OTHER PLATFORMS

This appendix provides suggestions for how some of the information above could be presented via other platforms. These are illustrative examples only and not intended to indicate binding assessment or use of the Drinkaware logo; Drinkaware's brand guidelines set out the usage of its logo (see section 3).



Example Brand Website

WORLD OF WINE



FREE UK mainland delivery
order online or call us

Search **GO**

Your shopping basket

Total amount:
£23.97

Don't want to wait in all day?
Call us to arrange a
2 hour time slot delivery.

OUR WINES AND OFFERS

- Red wine
- White wine
- Rosé wine
- Champagne & fizz
- Dessert & fortified
- Organic wine
- Vegetarian wines
- Wine gifts

Home Wine Shop Wine Facts Wine Types Wine Reviews Wine Recipes Wine Tasting

SUMMER SPECIAL OFFER ~ LIMITED STOCK

15% OFF

SANCERRE

UNDER **£15** A BOTTLE

FROM JUST **£12** A BOTTLE

SPARKLE UP SUMMER

OUR STAR BUY

CLICK HERE
Join our wine club today!

Mauris sed risus non massa molestie blandit nec mauris.

The UK Chief Medical Officers recommend adults do not regularly drink more than 14 units per week.

drinkaware.co.uk

