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Scotland Sets Minimum Prices for Alcohol

Alcohol in Scotland is about to get more expensive.

The Scottish Government announced today that it will set a minimum price of 50 pence per unit (10 milliliters) of alcohol - or about $0.81 for every 0.34 fluid ounces of booze. In U.S. dollars, that means a 750ml bottle of wine that costs $5.14 will shoot up in price to $7.56, or a bottle of cheap whiskey will go from $16.07 to $22.56 - about a 40 percent increase. The crackdown targets the cheaper drinks that alcoholics and teens may turn to.

According to a study from the University of Sheffield, after 10 years the minimum price law would contribute to 300 fewer deaths and 6,500 fewer hospital admissions annually.

It turns out binge drinking is also big problem in the U.K., CBS News reported, with Prime Minister David Cameron seeking a minimum alcohol price. Besides the public displays of drunkenness seen on the streets of Soho, health experts say binge drinking has reached "crisis levels" in the U.K., costing the government's National Health Service 2.7 billion pounds (US$.4.4 billion) each year and increasing cases of liver disease by 25 percent over the past decade.

Across the pond, 38 million Americans binge drink annually, as defined by the CDC as having more than four drinks in a single sitting. According to the CDC, increasing alcoholic beverage costs and taxes is an evidence-based intervention to prevent binge drinking and related harms.

Besides liver disease, binge drinking can cause health problems such as unintentional injuries (falls, crashes, drowning), intentional injuries (sexual assault, violence), alcohol poisoning, unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, high blood pressure, stroke and heart disease, brain damage, and certain kinds of cancer. US Dietary Guidelines on alcohol consumption recommend no more than 1 drink per day for women and no more than 2 drinks per day for men.