

Alcohol to have a minimum price



Ministers look set to introduce measures to see minimum pricing for alcohol in England and Wales.

This will see shops and bars prevented from selling alcoholic drinks for less than the tax they pay on them in a bid to prevent binge drinking.

As an example, the lowest price weak lager could be sold at would be 38p a can and £10.71 for a bottle of vodka.

In Scotland, MSPs rejected plans for minimum pricing last September while Northern Ireland ministers have called from measures to halt alcohol being sold cheaply.

The Home Office plan for England and Wales will see the sale of alcohol below "cost price" banned.

Research from Sheffield University has suggested that setting the minimum price of alcohol at 50p a unit would reduce

drink-related deaths by 3,000 within a decade.

However, the British Medical Association wants to see even tougher action on binge drinking than already proposed, while the charity Alcohol Concern fears it will still be possible to buy very cheap alcohol.

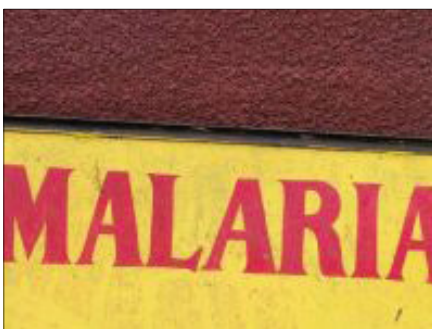
Chief executive Don Shenker said: "Duty is so low in the UK that it will still be possible to sell very cheap alcohol and be within the law.

"The government needs to look again at a minimum price per unit of alcohol. That is the only evidence-based approach that will end cheap discounts once and for all."

Chris Sorek, chief executive of the charity Drinkaware, added that a range of measures were needed to tackle alcohol-related problems and that supply and price were not the only factors driving alcohol misuse.

17258

Malaria warnings needed on late holiday deals



Experts have issued a warning over travel websites offering late deals to malarial regions.

They say the sites must carry clear warnings of the risk and give buyers enough time and information to take necessary precautions.

Concern has been raised by doctors who treated three UK patients in a week who had been to The Gambia.

All booked their holidays on the same site and none had sought medical advice before travelling to an area of Western Africa where malaria was endemic and they would have needed to take anti-malaria tablets and carry mosquito repellent.

The patients, in their 40s and 50s, were treated for a serious form of malaria at the James Cook University Hospital in Middlesbrough.

Writing to the British Medical Journal, Dr John Widdrington said: "Many travel

websites and holiday brochures, including the website used by our patients, make no specific reference to the risk of contracting malaria.

"Travel websites need to include explicit messages about taking medical advice and effective chemoprophylaxis before travelling to malaria endemic areas."

The doctors have also written to the UK travel trade association ABTA to raise the issue.

Dr Widdrington said part of the problem was people leaving the planning of their holidays until the last minute.

ABTA said most travel websites carried information about the risks of malaria, but it was not always "upfront" and the onus was on the consumer to check properly for advice.

"When people are in a hurry not everybody will look in true depth and do all the research they need to," she added.

17272

5-a-day 'not enough'



New research has suggested that five servings of fruit and vegetables a day are no longer enough.

Researchers, who looked at the diet and lifestyles of more than 300,000 people across eight countries in Europe, say we may need eight servings to cut the risk of dying from heart disease.

The European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition (EPIC)-Heart study found that people who consumed at least eight portions of fruits and vegetables a day had a 22% lower risk of dying from heart disease than those who ate three portions a day.

Every additional portion – which was counted as 80 grams of fruit or vegetable - cut the risk by 4%.

While in the UK men managed 4.1 portions and women 4.8 portions a day, Italian men enjoyed 7.5 portions a day, and Spanish women 6.7 portions.

However, study researcher Francesca Crowe from the Cancer Epidemiology Unit at the University of Oxford, said: "We do need to be cautious in our interpretation of these findings as participants with a higher intake of fruits and vegetables tended to be slightly healthier overall.

"So we are unable to say whether the association between fruits and vegetables and heart disease is causal."

Recent research from the British Heart Foundation and the University of Oxford suggested that some 15,000 lives a year could be saved if everyone ate five servings a day.

BHF senior dietician Victoria Taylor said: "The take-home message is still that eating fruit and vegetables is healthy for your heart."

UK

Cola drink ad banned

The Advertising Standards Authority has banned an advertisement for Coca-Cola's Vitamin Water for claiming that the drink is "nutritious" when it contains up to five teaspoons of sugar.

Three people complained that the poster for Vitamin Water was misleading for using the word "nutritious" in the catchline, with one of them saying they believed each 500ml bottle contained more than 30g of sugar. Coca-Cola said the product actually contained 23g of sugar per 500ml and has defended the use of the word "nutritious".

17277

New study for flu treatments

GlaxoSmithKline has started a study testing intravenous zanamivir against Roche's best-selling pill Tamiflu as a treatment for patients hospitalised with influenza.

Intravenous zanamivir is not currently approved for sale in any country, but the British drug maker aims to enrol 462 patients in 20 countries and for a Phase III trial, which will measure the time to clinical response in patients with confirmed flu and take around three years to complete. GSK had previously said it planned to develop an intravenous form of zanamivir to help the sickest patients.

17275

Maternity leave to be shared

Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg has unveiled proposals to allow couples to share maternity leave.

The new scheme will let a father take up any remaining unpaid leave if their partner goes back to work early. Also in the proposals, he said the government would be looking at plans to extend the right to ask for flexible hours to grandparents and close family friends. The government is set to consult on the updated system of shared parental leave to be introduced in 2015.

17257

Apple boss takes medical leave

Apple boss Steve Jobs has announced that he is to take medical leave from the company to focus on his health.

Writing to his workforce via email, Mr Jobs – who was absent from Apple for six months up to mid-2009 to have a liver transplant – said he planned to be back at work as soon as he can. The transplant was part treatment he has undergone for pancreatic cancer. He was first diagnosed as suffering from the cancer in 2004 and underwent surgery later that year to remove a tumour from his pancreas.

17256

Fertility helped by antioxidants

Researchers have suggested that antioxidants may help improve male fertility.

A review of existing data by researchers from The Cochrane Library, compared with controls, found that a couple was more likely to have a pregnancy or live birth if the man took certain vitamins or other antioxidants. Researchers looked at trials of more than 1,000 couples at fertility clinics where most of the men had low sperm counts – a condition affecting one in 12 men - though UK experts say more research is still needed.

17271

New cancer therapy 'saving lives'

Staff at the Christie Hospital in Manchester believe a tough but pioneering treatment is showing promising results for patients with advanced kidney cancer.

The unit is spearheading a specialist immunotherapy treatment which uses the body's immune system to fight cancer cells with the latest findings showing that a quarter of patients treated with high doses of Interleukin-2 are now in remission. Professor Robert Hawkins said patients were carefully selected because Interlukin was an aggressive drug and the treatment was difficult.

17245