Opportunities for early intervention for hazardous alcohol use

Primary care services are the first point of contact with the health system for most people, including those who experience issues related to their own or whānau members’ alcohol use.

Recent analysis of the New Zealand Health Survey\(^1\) shows people meeting criteria for hazardous drinking\(^2\):
- at least 4 in 5 aged 45+ visit a GP each year
- males and Māori aged under 45 visit GPs less
- fewer GP visits are made by people living in more deprived areas.

Improved screening and brief intervention in primary care

Regular screening and discussions about alcohol use in primary health settings can help prevent a wide range of health consequences and reduce premature mortality, the development of more severe issues, and provide an opportunity for earlier intervention.

As Māori, especially young Māori males, are less likely to access GPs there is a need to better engage with Māori to provide opportunities for early intervention for hazardous alcohol use.

Options to enhance engagement with Māori for services to consider include:
- designing and delivering services in culturally responsive ways
- providing services in a range of settings that suit Māori people
- reducing barriers to access for Māori people
- equipping the workforce with values, attitudes, knowledge and skills to better engage and respond to Māori people
- developing health promotion messages that are effective for Māori people
- developing and growing relationships with iwi, hapū and local communities.

Partnership with Māori and the principles of mana motuhake ensure decisions involve Māori communities, hapū and iwi, so solutions work for Māori people.

For further information

- alcohol.org.nz Provides information, advice, research and resources for people wanting to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harm and inspire others to make better decisions about lower risk drinking.
- drugfoundation.org.nz Includes information on how to support others and talk about alcohol and other drug use.
- bpac.org.nz Provides information on the assessment and management of alcohol misuse by primary care.
- matuaraki.org.nz Brief intervention guide for addressing risk and harm related to alcohol, tobacco, other drugs and gambling.


\(^2\) Hazardous drinking (eg AUDIT scores over 8) increases a person's risk of mental and physical health issues.