

Binge drinking numbers prompt Ottawa Public Health campaign



The city of Ottawa has launched a new campaign against binge drinking, following a study that found alcohol is responsible for about 110 deaths and 970 hospitalizations in Ottawa each year.

Ottawa Public Health defines binge drinking as five drinks or more in a sitting, and said one quarter of adults and three in four adult males aged 19 to 24 reported heavy or frequent binge drinking in the past year.

Those averages are consistently higher than the provincial average, according to Sherry Nigro with Ottawa Public Health.

"The heavy drinking, which is binge drinking once a month or more, increased from 15 per cent in 2000 to 24 per cent in 2011 among adults, and that's again consistently higher than the Ontario rates, particularly since 2007," said Nigro.

The public health agency said it plans to step up its promotion of the Canada's Low Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines and increasing access to treatment and referral services.

Easy to rack up shot totals, tavern manager says

Centretown Tavern manager Michelle Melanson said she doesn't believe Ottawans drink more than their counterparts in places like Montreal or Toronto.

But Melanson says a wild night out can lead to consumption that is triple Ottawa Public Health's binge drinking definition.

"It's not so much the drinks, it's the shots. I might have five or six drinks all night — which is between 10 or 11 and about 2 (in the morning)," she said. "I could have easily 10 shots."

Melanson admits, however, that she often doesn't feel too good the next day either.

"Not good for the next few days, because I'm older," she said.