

# Health tips for World Cup fans

The Department of Health (DH) today (November 20) appealed to soccer fans to stay health-conscious at all times and adopt a healthy lifestyle while watching games in the World Cup, which will kick off soon.

A spokesman for the DH said that with most of the matches running in evenings or late hours in Hong Kong time, soccer fans are reminded to get enough sleep. Insufficient sleep can lower people's immunity and make them prone to illnesses. It will also affect work performance and increase risks of accidents and injury. In addition, when enjoying the matches in catering premises or bars/pubs, people should maintain personal hygiene at all times. They should also comply with the various anti-epidemic regulations and restrictions as well as the related regulations and directions on group gatherings and mask wearing.

The spokesman reminded that healthy eating is key to good health. Though some football fans love crispy snacks such as potato chips and fried food, sugary drinks and alcoholic beverages while watching the matches, it is important to maintain healthy eating, avoid drinking alcohol and refrain from smoking for the sake of their health.

While enjoying the matches, avoid sitting or lying down for too long and try to do some stretching or move around regularly. Schedule some exercise to maintain an adequate level of physical activity.

"About 80 per cent of heart disease, strokes, type 2 diabetes and 40 per cent of cancers could be prevented through adopting a healthy lifestyle. Under the ['Towards 2025: Strategy and Action Plan to Prevent and Control Non-communicable Diseases in Hong Kong'](#) (SAP) announced by the Government, one of the targets is to achieve a 10 per cent relative reduction in the prevalence of insufficient physical activity among adolescents and adults. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends adults to do at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity every week while children and adolescents aged 5-17 years old should do at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous-intensity physical activity every day. Apart from watching the matches, the public should strive to take part in different kinds of sports activities to enjoy the fun of sports," the spokesman said.

Another target of the SAP is to achieve at least 10 per cent relative reduction in the prevalence of binge drinking and harmful use of alcohol among adults and in the prevalence of drinking among youth. According to the International Agency for Research on Cancer of WHO, alcohol has been classified as a Group 1 carcinogen (cancer causing agent to humans), the same category as tobacco smoke, which can increase the risk of a number of cancers. The more alcohol you drink, the higher your risk of cancer. Besides, alcohol can impair brain function and affect self-control ability. Binge drinking, even on one occasion, can result in misbehaviours and increases the immediate risks of accidents and injury, or even acute alcohol poisoning. The

public should avoid drinking alcohol while watching the matches. They can still have a great time choosing non-alcoholic beverages.

Following are some tips for soccer fans to stay healthy while enjoying the international event:

Stay away from tobacco and alcohol:

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- \* Alcohol can cause cancer and there is no safe drinking level. Non-drinkers are advised not to start drinking while drinkers should limit and cut down alcohol consumption to reduce harm.
- \* Binge drinking (also known as heavy episodic drinking, refers to consumption of more than 60 grams of pure alcohol on a single occasion, which is equivalent to approximately five cans of beers or five glasses of table wine or five pegs of spirits) increases the risk of alcoholic intoxication, accidental injury, violence and traffic accidents. In this connection, do not pressure your friends to drink and avoid drinking games.
- \* Never drink and drive. Use public transport or get a trusted person to take you home if you drink.
- \* As both active and passive smoking are hazardous to health, refrain from smoking and encourage family members or friends to quit smoking.
- \* When you feel like smoking, wash your face, do stretching exercises, try deep breathing and drink water to divert your attention from the urge.

Eat smartly:

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- \* Choose healthier snacks such as baked potato chips, baked sweet potato chips, corn chips, unsalted nuts and low-fat popcorn, and eat in moderation.
- \* Limit fatty and sugary snacks such as potato chips, shrimp strips, buttered popcorn and chocolate.
- \* Choose fresh fruit as your snacks to achieve the daily target of having at least two servings of fruit every day.
- \* Drink plenty of water or prepare a delicious and refreshing drink at home, such as home-made lemonade by mixing the lime and soda water together.
- \* Choose drinks with no or low sugar instead of alcohol and sugary drinks.

Do not forget:

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- \* Ensure good indoor ventilation.
- \* Stretch and move around while watching the matches.
- \* Sit properly while watching a soccer match to avoid muscle aches afterwards.
- \* Make sure you have enough sleep. Insufficient sleep can lower your immunity and make you more prone to illnesses, affect your working performance and increase risks of accidents and injury.
- \* Reserve time to do some exercise.
- \* Strike a balance between watching matches and fulfilling your social commitments.

Drinkers can consider to check their drinking risk by logging on to the e-alcohol screening and brief intervention (e-SBI) tool ([change4health.gov.hk/en/audit](http://change4health.gov.hk/en/audit)) and limit their drinking volume accordingly.

Members of the public can call the DH's health education hotline 2833 0111 and the DH's Integrated Smoking Cessation hotline 1833 183, or visit the Centre for Health Protection's website at [www.chp.gov.hk](http://www.chp.gov.hk) and the Tobacco and Alcohol Control Office's website at [www.livetobaccofree.hk](http://www.livetobaccofree.hk) for more information.