



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Swanswell's twelve days of Christmas

13 December 2011, Sandwell – 'tis the season to be jolly but Swanswell's encouraging everyone to do that safely.

In December, the amount of alcohol consumed in the UK increases dramatically by 40% (Drinkaware, 2011)¹, as people celebrate during the party season throughout Christmas and New Year but the risk of doing lasting damage increases too.

In the short term, over-doing the amount of alcohol drunk can cause dehydration and temporary memory loss to name just a few of the side effects, but regularly over-doing it can eventually lead to serious problems with health, relationships and work.

So Swanswell, a national charity that helps people overcome drug, alcohol and other problem behaviour, has come up with a novel way of helping people stay well over the twelve days of Christmas and beyond.

Debbie Bannigan, Swanswell's Chief Executive, said: *'We know there's a temptation to drink more at this time of year than you usually would because of parties or access to cheaper alcohol through supermarket promotions.*

'However, during the festivities, people often forget how easy it can be to move from sensible to excessive drinking, and don't realise the harm that can bring to your life.

‘So we’ve come up with a different way to remember at least some of the alcohol-related facts that can help you make informed decisions about your drinking and, above all, help you have a safe and happy festive season.’

Swanswell’s twelve days of Christmas

On the first day of Christmas, Swanswell gives to you ...a reason to change and be happy.

On the second day of Christmas, Swanswell gives to you...two recommended daily drinking limits (2-3 units for women and 3-4 units for men, with at least two drink free days per week).

On the third day of Christmas, Swanswell gives to you...three ways to get in touch for support (phone, website and email).

On the fourth day of Christmas, Swanswell gives to you...four questions to test your alcohol risk (try our drink check – or FAST² test - available at www.swanswell.org/alcohol).

On the fifth day of Christmas, Swanswell gives to you...five golden tips for staying safe (see below).

On the sixth day of Christmas, Swanswell gives to you...six alternatives to alcohol (soft drink, water, mocktail, non-alcoholic beer, tea or coffee).

On the seventh day of Christmas, Swanswell gives to you...food for thought – there’s around 750 calories in four pints of 4% lager³ (the equivalent to around two cheeseburgers⁴).

On the eighth day of Christmas, Swanswell gives to you...eight thousand reasons not to drink and drive (8,620 road accidents in 2008 happened when a driver was over the legal limit for alcohol – just over 2,000 of whom died or were seriously injured as a result)⁵.

On the ninth day of Christmas, Swanswell gives to you...a reminder of how quickly units add up (there’s 9 units in a 750ml bottle of 12% white wine for example).

On the tenth day of Christmas, Swanswell gives to you...ten Swanswell offices across the country where you can contact us (details on our website).

On the eleventh day of Christmas, Swanswell gives to you...a simple way to remember to drink safely (‘one or two, once or twice a week’).

On the twelfth day of Christmas, Swanswell gives to you...best wishes for another 12 happy and safe months.

Five golden tips to staying safe, if you do decide to drink

1. Don’t drink on an empty stomach
2. Plan your night out (where you’re going and how you’ll get home – don’t drink and drive)
3. Avoid buying in rounds (as it’s more difficult to keep an eye on how much you’ve had)
4. Drink plenty of water or soft drinks to rehydrate (make every other drink a non-alcoholic one)
5. Recover (if you do have a big night out, give yourself at least 48 hours before drinking alcohol again)

To find out more about Swanswell and the services it provides, visit

www.swanswell.org.

[ENDS]

Notes for editors

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About Swanswell

Swanswell is a national charity that helps people overcome drug, alcohol and other problem behaviour. We believe that everyone deserves the chance to change and to be happy. We help them to remove the things that stand in their way, whether physical, emotional or practical. So, as their lives improve, they can feel well, do well, and stay well. Swanswell has a reputation for innovation and is a leading developer of new services which help people to change their behaviour for the better.

Swanswell has a number of offices across the country including Coventry and Warwickshire, Birmingham, Barnsley, Sandwell, Leicestershire and Rutland. Visit Swanswell at: www.swanswell.org.

Join the conversation, follow Swanswell on twitter at www.twitter.com/Swanswell.

References

1. Drinkaware 2011. *Preventing Xmas overload*. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.drinkaware.co.uk/alcohol-and-you/archive/2009/avoiding-the-xmas-overload> [accessed 12/12/11]
2. The FAST Test (PDF), by the Health Development Agency and University of Wales College of Medicine
3. Drinkaware 2011, 'Alcohol and your health – what did you drink yesterday?'. [Online]. Available at: <http://www.drinkaware.co.uk/facts/factsheets/alcohol-and-your-health> [Accessed 12/12/11].
4. Based on calorie figures from Weight Loss Resources 2011, *Calorie Counter*. [online]. Available at: http://www.weightlossresources.co.uk/calories/calorie_counter.htm [accessed 12/12/11]
5. Drinkaware 2011. *Drink driving and the legal alcohol limit*. [Online]. Available at <http://www.drinkaware.co.uk/facts/drink-driving> [accessed 12/12/11]