

wine a week. Ah, but no, the correspondent was a drug-prevention professional relaying a new official line: anyone who drinks more than three bottles of wine a week is an alcoholic.

And that's probably true if we're talking about eight-year-olds. Yes, an eight-year-old drinking three bottles of wine a week is cause for concern. They certainly shouldn't drink as much as I do. Their little livers have less processing power. On the other hand, the Beast from the East is considerably bigger than I am and he might cope bravely with a cubic foot of chardonnay because he's fighting fit, seven foot two and weighs 300 lbs. He'll have a liver the size of a Dunlopillo.

Things can move quickly in the public discourse on these things and across a range of issues of health, attitudes and social policy. The official version gets accepted

many - when I was drinking more than 30 units a week. In fact, I was drinking 30 bottles a week. Five bottles a day except at weekends when I'd cut down for social reasons.

It was a lot, I agree. You may think I am boasting foolishly, and to be honest, there may be something in that. However, the fact remains that for some consecutive months in the mid-Eighties, I was drinking 30 bottles of wine a week. I won't go through the daily timetable but it was easier than you might think for a young man with a fast metabolism, an excitable nature and energetic pursuits. One pointer: you have to make full use of lunch. It gets early runs on the board that are difficult to make up later in the day.

Whatever you may think now, it never occurred to me I was an alcoholic. I was dependent on coffee, that was obvious, because

result, millions of Britons can be classified as alcoholics.

This is unwise. Millions of Britons (the ones who drink two or three times the official limit without being alcoholics) will add it to the official inflation of everything, and take less notice than they otherwise would. Not only of this advice but of all sorts of other official instruction. Because advice changes over the years, according to the passing fashions. Research has told us very different things about eggs, aspirin, water, and even alcohol. Binge-drinking, I can remember, was

**Every decade
the safe limit
for alcohol goes
lower and lower**

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Meanwhile, the "worried well" who believe all this official terrorism go to their doctors for their constant check-ups and neurotic need for reassurance. They'll live forever, add significantly to the national debt, demand constant immigration of young carers and annoy their children for an extra 30 years....

There's much more to be said on this, but you'll have to excuse me. It's nearly 6pm.

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You won't get me back into flatties



**Helen
Croydon**

APPARENTLY THE killer heel is out. Or so declared one Sunday newspaper this weekend. As I tore it open to find out exactly why and who has decided that women's favourite indulgence since fashion was invented is to be snatched from under our feet, so to speak, a friend caught the headline over my shoulder. She shrieked in horror that how on earth would she be able to seduce a man in flat shoes.

Whoever made up the news that heels are out is so wrong. The heel will never be out because, you see, it isn't about comfort or practicality. It isn't even about height - it is about power, posture and the ultimate

expression of femininity. Imagine if some one decided to write that ties are out of fashion. Would the alpha male really start cutting up his Paul Smiths and turn up to the office with an open shirt, breathing a sigh of relief that at last his throat and upper chest hairs can breathe?

Same goes for our footwear. There is something about a long, elegant, shapely heel on the end of a pedicured foot and a stockinged leg that screams, I'm a sassy woman, I'm confident and I must be very balanced because I can channel all my body weight on the 5cm-squared surface area of the ball of my foot.

I fear there is a planned coup to topple the heel. In September the TUC called for risk assessments on women wearing high heels at work and there was talk they could be banned. As if that would ever happen. There would be an army of women marching in Manolo Blahniks to the home of

Brendan Barber, and HR officers would be attacked from all angles with the blood-red soles of Louboutins should they dare to suggest that female employees should change into trainers.

And the same month, Katie Holmes was lambasted for allowing her three-year-old daughter, Suri Cruise, to wear heels, even though they were only one-and-a-half inches and she looked perfectly comfortable. Then, to top it all, the Society of Chiropractors and Podiatrists issued a warning against elevated footwear, claiming that we risk bunions, chaffing, hard skin, ingrown toenails and hammer

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toes. What was its point exactly?

Now, thanks to the likes of festival goers such as Kate Moss and Lily Allen, and loafer-lovers like Alexa Chung, even the glossies are giving the boot to mouth-watering silver-studded platforms and good-enough-to-eat peep-toe thigh boots. They are replacing them with dull pictures of pumps, ugg boots and flip-flops.

Next, someone will be telling me that hoarding boxes of shoes that I have never even worn, just so I can look at them, is not a fulfilling pursuit. I can't help thinking that all this heel bashing is a conspiracy by men and women who are scared of the feminine power a stiletto can yield. If people want to put their podiatric welfare above sashaying hips, long legs, taut calf muscles, an inner pleasure that lasts all day and the ability to level up eye-to-eye with the men in the boardroom, that's fine. But they shouldn't try to stop the shoe-lover from enjoying her innocent pleasure: sex on legs.

Band get the blues

IT CAN be hard being famous for being Beale Street, "home of the blues". The neon-lit Memphis street where it all started turns out the standard vibe these days night after night after night. The hardest-working band on the street, by their own estimation, is the Doctor Feelgood Potts blues band. Except for a nightly rendition of *Tip The Band*, it's strictly BB King, right, and Howlin' Wolf covers for the benefit of the tourists. The band's laconic bass player was refreshingly honest when asked what he would really like to be playing. With a stare that was full of real misery, he said: "Anythin' but the blues."

