



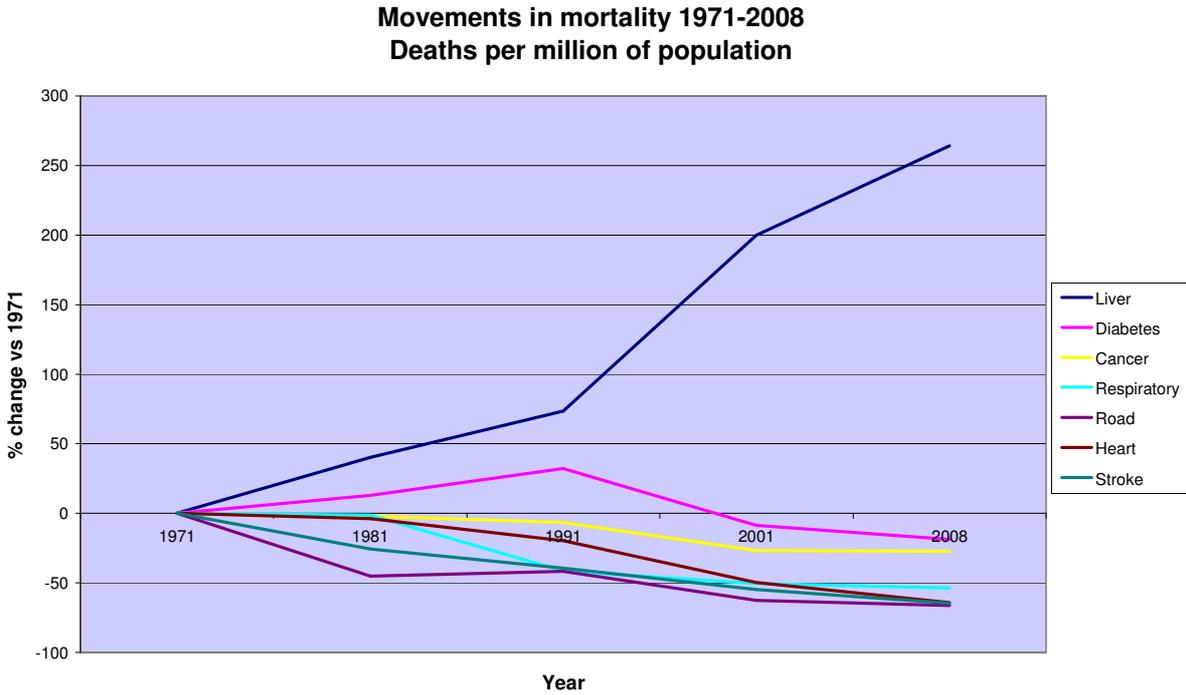
**PRESS STATEMENT:  
Tuesday 8 December, 2009**

### **Liver disease deaths increase by 12% in just three years**

#### **Alcoholic liver disease in the young increases by over a quarter in four years**

Government mortality statistics for the UK indicate that deaths from liver disease continue to rise, increasing by 12% in the last three years, totalling 46,244 lives lost. In 2008, liver disease killed 16,087 people – a 4.5% increase from 2007. If these rates continue, deaths from liver disease are predicted to double in 20 years.

This graph, produced by the British Liver Trust, illustrates the true extent of liver disease in the UK. Liver disease, when compared to the other five big causes of death, is the only one showing a steady increase year-on-year:



Alison Rogers, Chief Executive of the British Liver Trust, says:  
“Once again we are seeing the tide of liver disease rising further and putting a huge strain on the NHS. The sad fact is that 95% of all liver disease is entirely preventable.”

A comparison to figures published four years ago shows that there has been a 26% increase in people under the age of 25 dying from alcoholic liver disease in England and Wales. In 2006, 161 young people died compared to 2004 when 122 died.

“This is an alarming trend, particularly when you consider that alcoholic liver disease typically takes up to ten years to develop. This means that young people are putting their liver health at increased risk from a very young age. Let’s be clear, alcohol is a drug, and drugs harm your liver. There are no ifs or buts about this, and the statistics are very clear.

The mortality figures affirm official statistics reported earlier this year in The Information Centre’s [Smoking, drinking and drug use among young people in England in 2008](#) report which illustrated that young people are drinking more the equivalent of 15 shots per week.

Sadly alcoholic liver disease deaths amongst the young are not the only aspect of liver disease on the rise. All liver diseases are on the rise, including fatty liver disease and viral hepatitis.

“With 300 people each week dying from liver disease, the promised new strategy needs to focus on what can be done to reduce these deaths. There is certainly not a one-hit wonder approach to liver disease as it is a demographically diverse killer. Aside from improving treatment services and diagnosis rates for liver disease, there are a packet of measures that could help; excess alcohol consumption could be curbed through the introduction of a minimum price per unit; fatty liver needs better awareness and due recognition; people need to be tested for viral hepatitis and hepatitis B could be relatively easily addressed with a universal vaccination,” said Rogers.

Ends

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**Editor's Note:**

1. Mortality from liver disease across the UK: Male 9,335, Female 6,752.  
 Alcoholic liver disease across the UK: Male 3942, Female 1,922. Of these 190 were under the age of 35.

The data was calculated through analysing the official statistics from the following sources:

- The Office of National Statistics (covering England and Wales):  
[http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme\\_health/DR2008/DR\\_08.pdf](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_health/DR2008/DR_08.pdf)
- General Register Office for Scotland: <http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk/statistics/publications-and-data/vital-events/vital-events-reference-tables-2008/section-6-deaths-causes.html>
- Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency:  
[http://www.nisra.gov.uk/archive/demography/publications/annual\\_reports/2008/Table6.4\\_2008.xls](http://www.nisra.gov.uk/archive/demography/publications/annual_reports/2008/Table6.4_2008.xls)

2. This table indicates the increase over the last four years in liver disease deaths:

Year	2005			2006			2007			2008		
	Male	Female	Total									
<b>Total UK</b>	<b>8,257</b>	<b>6,070</b>	<b>14,327</b>	<b>8,606</b>	<b>6,164</b>	<b>14,770</b>	<b>8,976</b>	<b>6,411</b>	<b>15,387</b>	<b>9,335</b>	<b>6,752</b>	<b>16,087</b>

**Percentage changes:**

- Between 2005 and 2006 there was a 3.09% increase in liver disease deaths
- Between 2006 and 2007 there was a 4.2% increase in liver disease deaths
- Between 2007 and 2008 there was a 4.5% increase in liver disease deaths

3. The British Liver Trust is Britain's only national liver disease charity for adults. We work to improve the lives of people suffering from liver disease with key roles in education, support and research.
4. The Trust is working urgently to encourage prevention and investment in treatment and care for people with liver disease. Much of the increasing incidence of liver disease stems from lifestyle trends – relating to alcohol, obesity and viral hepatitis. However, liver disease has many other causes including genetics, abnormalities in the immune system and even the medicines we take. The Trust is working to raise awareness about the liver and combat the stigma associated with liver disease.
5. The Trust provides a comprehensive website [www.britishlivertrust.org.uk](http://www.britishlivertrust.org.uk), free medical helpline – 0800 652 7330, and distributes a wide range of information leaflets to individuals and healthcare professionals. In addition, the Trust is a contact point for support groups nationwide, as well as co-ordinating funding and providing support for research.