

WHAT IS PAHOLA?



PAHOLA is the first digital health worker dedicated to alcohol-related topics, developed by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and launched in November 2021.

It can be accessed on PAHO's webpage, 24 hours per day, to an infinite number of users, from any device. The interaction with Pahola is anonymous and not identifiable. It is available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and French.

WHAT PAHOLA CAN DO?

- Provide evidence-based information about the impact of alcohol use on people's health.
- Assess people's risk from their drinking using a standardized questionnaire.
- Guide individuals at risk to develop a change plan to reduce or abstain from their drinking.
- Guide individuals who want to help a loved one with an alcohol-related problem.
- Refer individuals at high risk of alcohol-related problems to treatment and support in their own countries.
- Provide support free from alcohol-related stigma.

HOW DOES PAHOLA WORK?

- Pahola is based on artificial intelligence and can autonomously and empathetically interact with users on a variety of alcohol-related topics.
- Pahola was trained with conversation dialogues developed by PAHO in consultation with alcohol experts. More than 150 different topics were used to develop Pahola to work on alcohol health literacy, as well as to assess users' risks and guide them through a change plan.
- Its abilities to interact empathetically with users come from a "digital brain" that is based on neuroscience, in addition to the latest technology.
- Pahola uses language processing software to interpret the users' requests and manifest specific expressions.



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO IMPROVE ALCOHOL HEALTH LITERACY?

Alcohol health literacy is related to the idea of individuals being capable to acquire, process and understand knowledge on different alcohol topics. The advantages of improving health literacy include (1):

- Increase people's knowledge on alcohol content and strength, and the impact of alcohol use on their health.
- Empower people to critically think about the influence of alcohol marketing and media messages on their alcohol consumption and how to counteract them.
- Support the understanding of how alcohol is accepted in societies and how people can act collectively to advance alcohol policies that control its use and harms.

SCALING UP BRIEF INTERVENTIONS TO REDUCE ALCOHOL-RELATED PROBLEMS

- Screening and brief interventions (SBI) for individuals with high-risk alcohol use is one of the key alcohol policies recommended to reduce the harmful use of alcohol.
- Efficacy and effectiveness studies of SBI in primary care settings found a consistent decrease in self-reporting of drinking.
- While implementation of SBI remains a challenge in primary health care, Pahola could potentially increase its delivery, to complement health services and ease the burden of health professionals.
- Evidence shows that digital interventions seem to lower alcohol consumption in a similar level as face-to-face SBI.

WHAT IS THE FUTURE FOR PAHOLA?

PAHO will continue to work on its developments and revisions to ensure better usability and engagement, and to facilitate research to assess its efficacy and cost-effectiveness.

Pahola could become a global public health good easily adaptable to the needs of various health systems and in a variety of settings, and it can serve as a model for other conditions.

Talk to Pahola today: <https://www.paho.org/en/alcohol/pahola>

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References

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