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## Doctors' kitchen knives ban call

**A&E doctors are calling for a ban on long pointed kitchen knives to reduce deaths from stabbing.**

A team from West Middlesex University Hospital said violent crime is on the increase - and kitchen knives are used in as many as half of all stabbings.



Doctors say knives are too pointed

They argued many assaults are committed impulsively, prompted by alcohol and drugs, and a kitchen knife often makes an all too available weapon.

The research is published in the British Medical Journal.

The researchers said there was no reason for long pointed knives to be publicly available at all.

They consulted 10 top chefs from around the UK, and found such knives have little practical value in the kitchen.

None of the chefs felt such knives were essential, since the point of a short blade was just as useful when a sharp end was needed.

The researchers said a short pointed knife may cause a substantial superficial wound if used in an assault - but is unlikely to penetrate to inner organs.

In contrast, a pointed long blade pierces the body like "cutting into a ripe melon".

The use of knives is particularly worrying amongst adolescents, say the researchers, reporting that 24% of 16-year-olds have been shown to carry weapons, primarily knives.



Kitchen knives can inflict appalling wounds

The study found links between easy access to domestic knives and violent assault are long established.

French laws in the 17th century decreed that the tips of table and street knives be ground smooth.

A century later, forks and blunt-ended table knives were introduced in the UK in an effort to reduce injuries during arguments in public eating houses.

The researchers say legislation to ban the sale of long pointed knives would be a key step in the fight against violent crime.

"The Home Office is looking for ways to reduce knife crime.

"We suggest that banning the sale of long pointed knives is a sensible and practical measure that would have this effect."

### Government response

Home Office spokesperson said there were already extensive restrictions in place to control the sale and possession of knives.

"The law already prohibits the possession of offensive weapons in a public place, and the possession of knives in public without good reason or lawful authority, with the exception of a folding pocket knife with a blade not exceeding three inches.

"Offensive weapons are defined as any weapon designed or adapted to cause injury, or intended by the person possessing

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them to do so.

"An individual has to demonstrate that he had good reason to possess a knife, for example for fishing, other sporting purposes or as part of his profession (e.g. a chef) in a public place.

"The manufacture, sale and importation of 17 bladed, pointed and other offensive weapons have been banned, in addition to flick knives and gravity knives."

A spokesperson for the Association of Chief Police Officers said: "ACPO supports any move to reduce the number of knife related incidents, however, it is important to consider the practicalities of enforcing such changes."

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