



Pregnancy is an exciting time, a time when many women want to know what they can do to ensure that they stay healthy and give their baby the best start in life.

One thing that is important in keeping you and your baby healthy is to avoid drinking alcohol while pregnant, planning pregnancy or breastfeeding. This leaflet will help you make an informed choice and give you the best advice for you and your baby.

If you are pregnant or planning pregnancy, experts advise no amount of alcohol is safe.

The National Health and Medical Research Council, Australia's peak body on developing national health advice, recommends that for women who are pregnant, planning pregnancy or breastfeeding, not drinking alcohol is the safest option.

This is because no amount of alcohol has been proven as safe. The evidence is clear: alcohol causes birth defects. All alcohol crosses the placenta harming the baby.

If you have consumed alcohol while pregnant and are concerned, or are having trouble stopping drinking, you should talk to your doctor, midwife or obstetrician.

Talking about alcohol

Many women don't know exactly when they become pregnant and many pregnancies are not planned – so it is possible that you might have been drinking alcohol before you were aware of your pregnancy.

Talking about your drinking may seem daunting, but health professionals speak to lots of people about these issues and they want the best for you and your baby.

It is also important to talk to someone if you think you might be struggling with depression, stress or anxiety. Your health professional can refer you to services in your area to support you and your baby to be healthy. Some support services are listed on the back page.

Risks from drinking alcohol during pregnancy

- Increased risk of stillbirth, premature birth and low birth weight
- Increased risk of miscarriage
- Increased risk of birth defects
- Damage to the baby's brain causing conditions known as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, or FASD

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder - Facts

For most children with FASD there are no visible signs but they can have brain damage causing:

- Physical and emotional developmental delay
- Impaired speech and language development
- Learning problems, e.g. poor memory
- Difficulty controlling behaviour

The effects of FASD are lifelong.

When planning a pregnancy

Alcohol can reduce fertility and greatly increase the time it takes to get pregnant.

If you have stopped using contraception and are trying to get pregnant, you should consider not drinking alcohol at all.

When pregnant

It is never too late to stop drinking alcohol during pregnancy.

People might ask why you are not drinking. If you're not ready to announce your pregnancy, try saying:

- I'm on a health kick and have given up alcohol
- No thanks, I'm not drinking tonight
- I have a big day tomorrow so no thanks

If you're happy to tell people, simply say: No thanks, not while I'm pregnant.

Make the pledge to go alcohol free during your pregnancy or the pregnancy of a loved one.
www.pregnantpause.com.au

If it is difficult for you to stop drinking you should speak to your health professional for support.

When breastfeeding

Not drinking alcohol is the safest option. Alcohol enters the breast milk and may stay there for several hours.

Alcohol can decrease the flow of milk and cause your baby to be unsettled.

Alcohol in breastmilk can affect the baby's brain and spinal cord development.

Dispelling myths about pregnancy and alcohol

- There is no safe amount to drink during pregnancy. Having one or two drinks on a special occasion has **not** been found to be safe for developing babies.
- There is no safe time to drink during pregnancy. The baby's brain continues to develop throughout pregnancy. Drinking alcohol at any time will affect the developing brain.
- There is no safe type of alcohol to drink. Wine, beer and spirits all pass through the placenta to your baby.
- The concentration of alcohol in your blood is the same as the concentration in your breastmilk.
- Alcohol is not a healthy way to relieve stress.
- "Everything in moderation" does not apply to alcohol in pregnancy. Any alcohol you drink will pass through the placenta to your baby.

**No safe amount.
No safe time.
No safe type.**



If you are concerned about any of the issues raised in this leaflet you should consult a health professional.

Further information and support

Pregnancy, Birth and Baby Helpline

1800 822 438
www.pregnancybirthbaby.org.au

National FASD Hub

www.fasdhub.org.au

NOFASD Australia

www.nofasd.org.au

National Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline

1800 250 015
www.drughelp.gov.au

National Health and Medical Research Council

Australian guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol
www.nhmrc.gov.au/health-topics/alcohol-guidelines

Australian Breastfeeding Association

1800 686 268
www.breastfeeding.asn.au

Feedsafe: App to assist breastfeeding mothers

www.feedsafe.net

Lifeline

13 11 14
www.lifeline.org.au

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Information you might
not know about

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