



Information

you might not know about

pregnancy

and alcohol



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

When pregnant or planning a pregnancy, it is important not to drink any alcohol.

The advice of Australia's leading body on health and medical research, the National Health and Medical Research Council, is that:

If you are pregnant or planning a pregnancy, you should not drink alcohol.



This is because, at every stage of pregnancy, any alcohol you drink passes directly to your baby. Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause damage to the baby's developing brain, body and organs.



Risks from drinking alcohol during pregnancy

Drinking alcohol during pregnancy presents risks for you and your developing baby, including:

- Increased risk of miscarriage
- Increased risk of stillbirth, premature birth and low birth weight
- Increased risk of damage to the baby's developing brain, body and organs, and
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

About Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder or FASD

FASD is a lifelong disability caused by alcohol exposure during pregnancy. For most people with FASD there are no visible signs, but many experience the following challenges:

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

People with FASD experience a range of challenges and can need daily support.



Talk to your doctor, midwife or obstetrician

If you drank alcohol before you knew you were pregnant and are concerned, or if you are having trouble stopping drinking, you can talk to your doctor, midwife or obstetrician.

Health professionals speak to lots of people about alcohol. They can answer your questions and provide information on services in your area to support you and your baby.

It is never too late to stop drinking alcohol during pregnancy. Throughout your pregnancy the baby is developing and growing.



When planning a pregnancy and pregnant

The moment you start trying to get pregnant is the moment you should stop drinking alcohol.

Most people don't know the moment they become pregnant, which is why it is important to stop drinking alcohol as soon as you start trying.

Alcohol can also impact the fertility of both partners and increase the time it takes to get pregnant.

People may ask why you're not drinking. If you're not ready to share that you're trying to become pregnant or are pregnant, you could say:

- 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 trying to get pregnant" or "No thanks, not while I'm pregnant".

Your partner, friends or family may also choose to stop drinking alcohol to support you.

If it's difficult for you to stop or cut down on your drinking, you can speak to your doctor, midwife or obstetrician for support.



When breastfeeding

When breastfeeding, not drinking alcohol is safest for your baby.

Alcohol enters the breast milk. When breastfeeding, the alcohol concentration in your breast milk is the same as the concentration in your blood.

One standard drink can remain in breastmilk for up to two hours.

Alcohol in breast milk can affect the baby's brain and spinal cord which continue to develop after the baby is born.

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

You can use the Feed Safe app to know when your breast milk will be free from alcohol.

Things to remember



- If you are pregnant or planning pregnancy you should not drink alcohol.
- The moment you start trying is the moment to stop drinking.
- The alcohol you drink at any stage of pregnancy passes directly to your baby and can damage their developing brain, body and organs.
- It may be difficult for you to stop drinking alcohol – if so, it is really important to seek help from your doctor, midwife or obstetrician.
- It is safest not to drink when breastfeeding.

If you are concerned about any of the issues raised you should talk to your doctor, midwife or obstetrician.

For more information and support

Learn more about alcohol, pregnancy,
breastfeeding and FASD

everymomentmatters.org.au

Pregnancy, Birth and Baby Helpline

1800 822 436

NOFASD Australia Helpline

1800 860 613

National Alcohol and Other Drug Helpline

1800 250 015

Australian guidelines for reducing health risks
from drinking alcohol

nhmrc.gov.au/alcohol

Australian Breastfeeding Association

1800 686 268

Feed Safe App

feedsafe.net



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Learn more about FARE at fare.org.au

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