

The National Health and Medical Research Council recommend that to reduce the risk of harm to their unborn child, women who are pregnant or planning pregnancy should not drink alcohol.

Partners, friends and families of pregnant women play an important role in supporting a woman's decision to not drink.



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For more information about alcohol use during pregnancy, head to alcoholthinkagain.com.au

Supporting alcohol-free pregnancies



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Health experts recommend to prevent harm to their unborn child, women who are pregnant or planning pregnancy should not drink alcohol.

There is no safe amount or time to drink alcohol during pregnancy.

- A woman's placenta does not protect a baby from alcohol. When a woman drinks alcohol, it passes straight through the placenta to the baby, which means the unborn baby receives a similar concentration of alcohol as the mother.
- A baby's brain starts growing very early in pregnancy, often before the mother knows she is pregnant. Alcohol use when pregnant can damage the baby's brain which can lead to a range of lifelong physical, mental and behavioural disabilities, known as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).
- The risk of harm to the baby increases the more alcohol a mother consumes, and the more frequently she drinks.
- It's never too late - every effort made to stop drinking or reduce the amount consumed, lowers the risk of harm to the unborn baby and benefits the mother's health.
- If a woman was drinking alcohol before finding out about pregnancy, it does not automatically mean the baby will be harmed. Every pregnancy is different and there are a range of factors that play a role in determining the risk of harm to the baby.

My partner is pregnant. How can I support her to not drink alcohol?

We know partners want to help and support their loved one during pregnancy, but can often feel unsure of what to do or how to help. But you can play an important role, supporting the decision to not drink.

Here's some tips for how partners can to support alcohol-free pregnancies, including when planning pregnancy:

1. **Go alcohol-free.** The ideal to support your partner is by joining her in going alcohol-free. Women are more likely to not drink if their partner stopped drinking too.
2. **Encourage and support your partner to not drink.** Let your partner know that you support them in their decision to not drink alcohol. Women are more likely to not drink during pregnancy if their partner encouraged them to stop or cut back.
3. **Offer alcohol-free alternatives.** Support pregnant women to not drink alcohol by offering a range of alcohol-free alternatives, both at home and in social situations.
4. **Have open discussions about alcohol use in pregnancy.** Share with family and friends that there's no safe amount, time or type of alcohol to drink during pregnancy.
5. **Be compassionate.** For some women, stopping drinking can be difficult for a range of reasons. Let your partner know you are there to support them, and if they need help or someone to talk to, the Alcohol and Drug Support Line can support both you and your partner.

What other ways can friends and family support alcohol-free pregnancies?

The broader family network and peer groups also play an important role in supporting women to abstain from alcohol during pregnancy.

Here's some ways friends and family members can support alcohol-free pregnancies.

1. Organise social occasions that don't involve alcohol.
2. Reconsider your own drinking around women who are pregnant.
3. Offer other alternatives to reward and relax.
4. Offer alcohol-free alternatives at social events.
5. Don't pressure women (or anyone) to drink alcohol.

For more information about how to support alcohol-free pregnancies, head to alcoholthinkagain.com.au

If you or someone you know is pregnant and is concerned that alcohol has been consumed in early pregnancy, or are having trouble stopping drinking, contact a health care professional for support and appropriate referral to services.

For anyone concerned about their own or another person's alcohol or drug use, including during pregnancy, the Alcohol and Drug Support Line is a free, confidential, non-judgemental telephone counselling, information and referral service. Contact them 24 hours a day on **9442 5000** or **1800 198 024** (country callers).