

# Alcohol and Pregnancy and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

91% of Australian women think that health professionals should advise pregnant women to give up drinking alcohol.

## No Alcohol in Pregnancy is the Safest Choice

Australian women consider health professionals to be the best source of information about alcohol use in pregnancy.

## Please Ask Women About Alcohol – You Can Make a Difference

### The consequences of drinking alcohol during pregnancy include:

- brain damage
- poor growth
- developmental delay
- birth defects
- social and behavioural problems
- low IQ

**The consequences are life-long and may not be evident at birth**

## Guide to Addressing Alcohol Use in Pregnancy

**ASK** all women of childbearing age and pregnant women about their alcohol use. An effective way to ascertain consumption is to use a screening tool such as AUDIT

**ASSESS and RECORD** the level of risk of women's alcohol consumption

**ADVISE** women of childbearing age including pregnant women

- that no alcohol is the safest choice if a woman is pregnant or trying to get pregnant
- that the amount of alcohol that is safe for the fetus has not been determined
- that alcohol reaches concentrations in the fetus that are as high as those in the mother
- of the consequences of alcohol exposure to the fetus

Women who have consumed alcohol in pregnancy should be advised that

- the level of risk to the fetus is hard to predict
- stopping drinking at any time in the pregnancy will reduce the risk to the fetus
- the risk of harm to the fetus is low if only small amounts of alcohol were consumed before they knew they were pregnant
- any concerns about the child's development should be raised with a health professional

**ASSIST** women to stop or reduce alcohol consumption through

- positive reinforcement for those already abstaining
- advising on the consequences of alcohol exposure to the fetus
- conducting brief intervention or motivational interviewing with the aim of supporting them to abstain, and where this is not possible, to reduce alcohol intake and avoid intoxication

**ARRANGE** for further support for women by planning additional consultations or by referral to specialist services and support groups

## Evidence of Risk

The amount of alcohol that is safe for the fetus has not been determined. There is no safe time to drink alcohol during pregnancy. Alcohol exposure can have consequences for the development of the fetus throughout pregnancy and variation in effects can be due to the stage of development of the fetus at the time of exposure. Not all children exposed to alcohol during pregnancy will be affected or affected to the same degree, and a broad range of effects are possible. The level of harm is related to the amount of alcohol consumed, the frequency of the consumption and the timing of the exposure. The level of risk to the fetus is hard to predict.

There is no known level of alcohol consumption in pregnancy below which no damage to a fetus will occur.

**Advise women that no alcohol in pregnancy is the safest choice.**

## Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a general term which describes the range of effects that can occur in an individual who was exposed to alcohol during pregnancy. Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Alcohol Related Birth Defects and Alcohol Related Neurodevelopmental Disorder are diagnoses within FASD. Children with diagnoses included under the general term of FASD often have

- brain damage
- poor growth
- developmental delay
- difficulty hearing
- problems with vision
- difficulty remembering
- language and speech deficits
- poor judgement
- birth defects
- social and behavioural problems
- low IQ
- difficulty sleeping
- high levels of activity
- a short attention span
- problems with abstract thinking
- difficulty forming and maintaining relationships

## Further Information for Health Professionals

### Alcohol and Drug Information Services

Australian Capital Territory

New South Wales (ADIS)

New South Wales (Drug and Alcohol Specialist Advisory Service)

Northern Territory

Queensland

South Australia

Tasmania

Victoria

Western Australia

Ph: (02) 6207 9977 (24 hrs)

Ph: 1800 422 599 (24 hrs)

Ph: 1800 023 687

Ph: (08) 8922 8399

Ph: 1800 177 833 (24 hrs)

Ph: 1300 131 340 (24 hrs)

Ph: 1800 888 236 (24 hrs)

Ph: 1800 888 236 (24 hrs)

Ph: 1800 198 024 (24 hrs)

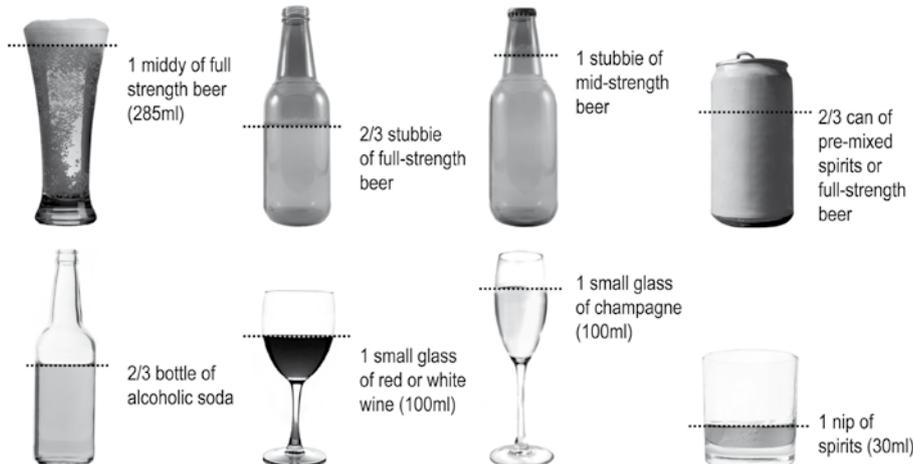
**Alcohol and Pregnancy Research Group, Telethon Institute for Child Health Research**

[www.ichr.uwa.edu.au/alcoholandpregnancy](http://www.ichr.uwa.edu.au/alcoholandpregnancy)

Ph: (08) 9489 7777

## STANDARD DRINK GUIDE

Each of these drinks is approximately **ONE STANDARD DRINK**



**Many single serve bottles, cans and glasses contain more than one standard drink. The number of standard drinks contained in an alcoholic drink is stated on the label.**

[www.ichr.uwa.edu.au/alcoholandpregnancy](http://www.ichr.uwa.edu.au/alcoholandpregnancy)

Download 'Alcohol and Pregnancy and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder: a Resource for Health Professionals'