

# ALCOHOL & PREGNANCY DON'T MIX

Healthy mothers and babies need everyone's support.



Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause your baby to be born with challenges in motor skills, physical health, learning, memory, attention, communication, emotional regulation, and social skills. These lifelong health and learning problems are called Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

## Are There Any Safe Times for Pregnant Women to Drink Alcohol?

Drinking alcohol can be harmful at any point during pregnancy. The baby's brain and body develop throughout the entire pregnancy.

## Is There a Safe Amount to Drink When Pregnant?

There is no *known* safe level of alcohol use during pregnancy, so it is safest not to drink at all when women are pregnant or planning to become pregnant.

Drinking more than three standard drinks at any one time and drinking regularly is the most harmful to you and your developing baby. Every step women can take to stop or reduce drinking and be healthy during pregnancy reduces the risk of FASD.

## Is There a Safe Type of Alcohol to Drink When Pregnant?

All types of alcohol, including beer, wine, hard liquor, coolers and ciders, can harm your baby. Binge drinking, that is, drinking more than three standard drinks at any one time, and drinking throughout your pregnancy, are the most harmful to your baby. There is no safe amount, safe time or safe type of alcohol to drink during pregnancy.

## What If I Was Drinking Before I Knew I Was Pregnant?

Women may drink alcohol before they realize they are pregnant. If you did drink and find out you're pregnant, it's important to realize it's never too late to quit or cut down on your drinking if quitting isn't possible. Every step you take to quit drinking or reduce the amount of alcohol you consume lowers the risk of harm.

As well as avoiding alcohol, here are some ways to have a healthy pregnancy:

- **Regularly see your doctor, nurse or midwife**
- **Eat healthy food according to Canada's Food Guide**
- **Cut down or stop your use of cigarettes and other drugs**
- **Balance rest and activity**
- **Reduce your stress. You can reduce stress by going for walks or taking part in other physical activities or talking with a supportive friend or family member**

## Tips for Partners and Friends of Pregnant Women

Many women are more likely to quit or cut down on their alcohol use if they are supported to do so. Partners, family and friends can all play an important role by providing support in various ways:

- Cut down or take a break from drinking to support your partner or avoid drinking around them
- Tell family, friends and anyone offering alcohol, that there is no known safe time to drink alcohol during pregnancy and no known safe amount or kind of alcohol
- Take part in social activities that don't involve drinking
- Offer non-alcoholic drinks and bring non-alcoholic drinks to social events
- Participate in recreation and physical activities with your pregnant friend or partner
- Offer practical support, for example, help with transportation to appointments or to treatment and care for other children
- Ask how you can help reduce stress in their life and about any support they might need to have a healthy pregnancy
- Recognize their efforts and celebrate small successes
- Offer to work through problems and barriers to change together

## Where Can I Get More Info and Help?

If you need help to cut down or stop drinking, be sure to talk to someone. Friends, family, or a doctor, midwife, nurse or counsellor can help.

**BC Association of Pregnancy Outreach Programs**  
Visit [bcapop.ca](http://bcapop.ca) for a listing of local support programs for pregnant women.

**Contact an Alcohol Counselor**  
The 24-hour BC Alcohol and Drug Information and Referral Service can provide information on where counselling is available in your area.

Lower Mainland (604) 660-9382  
Toll-free in BC 1-800-663-1441

**HealthLink BC**  
24-hour non-emergency health information and services. Dial 8-1-1 (for TTY dial 7-1-1) or visit [healthlinkbc.ca](http://healthlinkbc.ca)

**Your Local Public Health Unit**  
Search the FIND Services and Resources Directory at [healthlinkbc.ca/find](http://healthlinkbc.ca/find). When you call the public health units ask for a public health nurse or for the mental health and addictions team.

**QuitNow Services**  
You can get help to quit smoking at [quitnow.ca](http://quitnow.ca)  
Toll-free 1-877-455-2233

**Learn More About Low-Risk Drinking Guidelines:**  
<https://www.ccsa.ca/canadas-low-risk-alcohol-drinking-guidelines-brochure>

**About Alcohol and Women's Health:**  
<http://cewh.ca/featured-projects/women-alcohol-and-fasd-prevention/>

**About FASD:**  
<https://canfasd.ca>

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