



Jillian Skinner MP

Minister for Health Minister for Medical Research

MEDIA RELEASE

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NO ALCOHOL EQUALS NO RISK FOR PREGNANT WOMEN

Health Minister Jillian Skinner has welcomed a NSW Kids and Families call for pregnant women across NSW to say no to alcohol.

Tomorrow - the ninth day of the ninth month - is International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Awareness Day. FASD describes the range of potential effects on a child of a mother drinking alcohol during pregnancy.

NSW Kids and Families - one of the pillar agencies of NSW Health - is using the day to remind women that there is no safe level of consumption and a zero tolerance approach is best.

NSW Kids and Families senior clinical advisor for obstetrics, Dr Michael Nicholl, said the latest Australian Government survey shows 47 per cent of pregnant women consumed alcohol - and 20 per cent continued to drink alcohol once they knew they were pregnant.

"It is important that people realise that there is no safe time, no safe type and no safe amount of alcohol if a woman is pregnant or could become pregnant," Dr Nicholl said.

"Pregnant women should understand that when you drink alcohol, so does your baby. High level or frequent intake of alcohol during pregnancy increases the risk of miscarriage, stillbirth and premature birth. It's just not worth the risk."

Mrs Skinner welcomed the call by NSW Kids and Families.

"There have been recent mixed messages in the media about drinking during pregnancy and this creates a dilemma for many pregnant women," Mrs Skinner said.

"NSW Kids and Families believes a zero tolerance of alcohol during pregnancy gives baby the best possible start in life and I believe pregnant women can be guided by this expert view."

NSW Kids and Families senior clinical advisor for child and family health, Dr Elisabeth Murphy, said FASD can result in children being born with facial abnormalities and impaired growth.

"The diagnosis may not be evident at birth. Children affected by FASD can experience lifelong problems, including learning difficulties and disrupted education," Dr Murphy said.

“In Australia, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders is one of the leading preventable causes of developmental disability.

“Remember that it’s never too late to stop, seek help from your doctor or midwife or contact MotherSafe - a comprehensive counselling service at the Royal Hospital for Women Randwick,” she said.

“It’s also vital that pregnant women are supported by partners, family and friends to say no to alcohol during pregnancy.”

Earlier this year the Federal Government released, for the first time, the Clinical Practice Guidelines for Antenatal Care which advised women who are pregnant or planning to have a baby that not drinking is the safest option during pregnancy.