

ALCOHOL IN PREGNANCY

Is there a safe level of alcohol consumption in pregnancy?

The National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) *Australian Guidelines to Reduce Health Risks from Drinking Alcohol* (2009) specify that:

- Maternal alcohol consumption can harm the developing fetus or breastfeeding baby
- For women who are pregnant or planning a pregnancy, not drinking is the safest option
- For women who are breastfeeding, not drinking is the safest option.

How many women in Australia drink alcohol during pregnancy?

In the National Drug Strategy Household Survey (2010) 47 per cent of women in Australia were drinking alcohol in early pregnancy. One in five continued to drink throughout pregnancy, although the amount they were drinking was unknown. The survey suggests that women under 29 years tend to have a higher consumption of alcohol than older women, but are more likely to give up alcohol once they know they are pregnant. Older women with higher incomes are more likely to continue to drink alcohol throughout their pregnancy.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is an 'umbrella' term representing a range of conditions that result from alcohol exposure during pregnancy. The primary disabilities associated with FASD are directly linked to the underlying brain damage caused by alcohol exposure. These can include poor memory, impaired language and communication, poor impulse control, and mental, social and emotional delays.

Like many other disabilities, people who are born with FASD have the condition for life.

More information

There are a variety of resources that can be accessed from the Alcohol page on the [Australian Department of Health website](#).

In July 2014, new resources were developed by the [Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education](#) (FARE) in collaboration with leading health professional bodies across Australia and supported by funding from the Australian Government Department of Health. This is the first national campaign targeted at health professionals since the NHMRC guidelines were last updated in 2009. The campaign is entitled *Women Want to Know*.

The *Women Want to Know* resources include a range of information and are suitable for all types of health professionals, GPs, obstetricians and midwives. The *Women Want to Know* resources are all **free of charge**.

Reference

Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (2012) *The Australian Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Action Plan 2013- 2016*, p. 7.