

## What if I was drinking before I knew I was pregnant?

Please don't be alarmed if you are pregnant and have consumed small amounts of alcohol - the risk to your baby is low. If you stop or cut-down on your alcohol consumption at any time while you are pregnant it will increase your chances of having a healthier baby. If you are concerned, speak to your doctor.

If you don't think you can stop drinking or using other drugs, it is important to ask for help and discuss this with your doctor.

It is also important to take folic acid, avoid junk food and have healthy meals.

For further information and support you can use the FASD freecall Hotline - 1800rffada (1800 733 232).



### Support for parents, carers and services

Russell Family Fetal Alcohol Disorders Association  
PO Box 6795, Cairns Q 4870  
p. 1800rffada (1800 733 232) e. elizabeth@rffada.org  
www.rffada.org



### GET A GRIP teenz™

PO Box 5675, Brendale Q 4500  
www.getagripteenz.com



### For support for parents and carers

PO Box 206, Normanville SA 5204  
e. sue@nofasard.org.au  
www.nofasard.org.au



### For training on all aspects of FASD

Call 07 4050 0120 or 1800rffada (1800 733 232)  
e. anne@trainingca.com.au  
www.trainingca.com.au

## What do you know about alcohol and pregnancy?



## How much alcohol is safe during pregnancy?

If you are pregnant and you drink alcohol your unborn baby will have the same blood alcohol level as you. The placenta will not stop the alcohol from going to the baby. If you are breastfeeding alcohol will go straight to the breast milk and can cause problems for your baby.

Researchers do not know how much alcohol, if any, is safe to drink during pregnancy but they do know there is no safe time. They also know that the risk of damage increases the more you drink, and that binge drinking is especially harmful.

A weekend binge drinking session is more than enough to cause serious effects for your baby. Research studies have demonstrated that even small amounts may cause changes to the developing fetal brain, so .....

**no alcohol is the safest choice for a healthy baby!**



# THE FACTS

## about alcohol and pregnancy

### What is Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)?

Alcohol use in Australia is so much a part of our culture that we forget how harmful it can be, especially for unborn babies throughout pregnancy.

FASD is a term which describes a range of physical, mental, behavioural and learning disabilities that are a direct result of drinking alcohol during pregnancy.

The diagnosis an affected child might receive include:

- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS)
- partial Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (pFAS)
- Alcohol Related Neuro-developmental Disorders (ARND) and
- Alcohol Related Birth Defects (ARBD)

Children with FASD can be very difficult to control and they may not sleep much. Because of this behaviour, family and friends may be reluctant to babysit for you.

These disorders last for life and are not curable. Unless doctors have been specially trained to diagnose FASD, they may believe your child's problems to be ADD/ADHD, Asperger's Syndrome, a conduct disorder or Autism Spectrum Disorder.

FASD needs to be considered if a child has:

- learning or behavioural problems
- difficulty at kindy or school

and you know drinking occurred before pregnancy confirmation or throughout pregnancy.

### How can alcohol affect my baby?

Alcohol is a neurotoxin (poison) and a teratogen (an agent that is known to cause birth defects and/or permanent brain injury in the fetus). The alcohol destroys brain cells and will affect growth, structure and function of the developing brain. The placenta WILL NOT stop the alcohol from crossing to the baby.

The first three months of a pregnancy is when the organs are being formed. This is a particularly vulnerable time for the baby. Alcohol exposure during this time can cause a smaller head circumference, heart defects, limb damage, bone formation defects, kidney damage, eye problems, hearing problems and facial abnormalities. However, because the brain is forming throughout pregnancy, it may be affected by alcohol at any time.