# Alcohol and breastfeeding

# Alcohol and breastfeeding

## When breastfeeding, not drinking alcohol is safest for the health of your baby

# Alcohol and breastfeeding

## When breastfeeding, not drinking alcohol is safest for the health of your baby

## We want to give our babies the best start in life – and to help them be well-fed, settled, and healthy. That’s why, when breastfeeding, it’s important to make sure the breastmilk your baby drinks is alcohol-free. This will:

### Reduce health problems

It will help your baby be well-fed, settled, and healthy – and will reduce the risk of some long-term health effects.

### Avoid infant alcohol consumption

If you drink alcohol, it enters your breastmilk from your blood. While there is alcohol in your blood, it is also in your breastmilk.

### Help your baby sleep

Even small amounts of alcohol can disrupt your baby’s sleep and make feeding more difficult due to reductions in milk supply and the flow of milk.

### Protect baby's brain

Infant brains, which continue to develop after birth, are more vulnerable to alcohol than adult brains.

### Ensure your baby grows up healthy

Exposure to alcohol through breastmilk has been linked to problems with infant growth, motor development, verbal IQ, and cognitive ability in early childhood.

It is important to avoid alcohol in the early weeks of breastfeeding to ensure your baby receives a good supply of milk and settles into a sleep-wake pattern.

Once breastfeeding is well established, you may continue to choose to remain alcohol-free for your baby’s health as their brain continues developing.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q1ulleUqrQE

## Strategies if you drink alcohol while breastfeeding

If you do drink alcohol, you can ensure your baby does not drink breastmilk containing alcohol by:

* Waiting at least two hours per standard drink before feeding your baby to ensure your milk is alcohol-free.
* Using a tool like the [Feed Safe app](https://feedsafe.net/) to know when your breastmilk is alcohol free. Feed Safe uses your weight and height to calculate when your milk is alcohol-free.
* Expressing breastmilk before you drink alcohol so your baby can be fed this milk by you or someone else.

## Facts at a glance: Alcohol and breastfeeding

When breastfeeding, **not drinking alcohol is safest for the baby.** **If there is alcohol in the bloodstream, then there is alcohol in the breastmilk.** The alcohol concentration in your breastmilk will be the same as the alcohol concentration in your blood. Alcohol in breastmilk can **disrupt the baby’s feeding and sleeping patterns** and has been linked with developmental problems. The only way to eliminate alcohol from breastmilk is to **wait for your body to process the alcohol,** which takes an average of two hours per standard drink. The highest alcohol concentration in your breastmilk occurs **30 to 60 minutes after consuming alcohol.** Only time **reduces the concentration of alcohol** in your breastmilk to zero.

### Jen talks about alcohol-free breastfeeding

Jen found a range of enjoyable ways to stay healthy and active during her pregnancies with her sons. She also learned about the benefits of remaining alcohol-free during breastfeeding.

You can read more about alcohol and breastfeeding on our Every Moment Matters website.

[Things to know when breastfeeding if you drink alcohol](https://everymomentmatters.org.au/alcohol-and-pregnancy/breastfeeding/" \t "_blank)

More information

## Related information



## Need advice or support?

To find a local GP, you can call 1800 022 222 or visit [healthdirect.gov.au](http://healthdirect.gov.au). To find a local psychologist, visit [psychology.org.au/find-a-psychologist](http://psychology.org.au/find-a-psychologist). If you need other support to reduce your drinking, you can contact the National Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline on 1800 250 015.

## Join our community

Will you join the community taking action on alcohol?