# "Healthy pregnancies are a community responsibility"

*This story was first published on Every Moment Matters – Community Stories. You can read it*[*here.*](https://everymomentmatters.org.au/jens-story/)

When Jen fell pregnant in January 2019 it was a welcome surprise to both her and her partner. They’d previously been told they might have difficulties conceiving, and that fertility challenges were likely.

“I was aware since early high school that I might have fertility troubles or a shorter window in which to have kids,” Jen said. “After a long process I was able to freeze some of my eggs. My fertility specialist had told me we should only try for a couple of months before seeking help.

“The day before our specialist appointment I took a test and it was immediately positive! I was totally stunned and in disbelief after gearing up for a long and challenging journey.”

In September 2019 Jen gave birth to her first son, Harrison, and was thrilled to fall pregnant again in 2021 with her second son Max, born in March 2022.

Discussing her awareness of alcohol and pregnancy, Jen mentions that campaigns such as Every Moment Matters are so important in highlighting the risks, as well as informing people about disabilities like Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vIFl6Tx3-k

“More-specific information should be shared about what life is like for a person living with FASD, their parents and carers. Understanding the challenges they face can help people who are pregnant or planning for pregnancy commit to not drinking alcohol.

“I really appreciate the messages we’re hearing through this campaign. It shares the responsibility and makes it clear to everyone – not just the person who is pregnant – that at no stage is any alcohol fine for the baby.

“When family and friends are better informed, it’s easier and less awkward for the person who’s pregnant to avoid alcohol. There is so much pressure heaped on mothers, but healthy pregnancies are a community responsibility. Minimising the role of alcohol in social situations is such an easy way to be supportive.”

Jen breastfed both her sons and highlights that this is another area where people need clearer information about alcohol.

“If you’re breastfeeding, alcohol passes from your breast milk to your baby, and it can be hard to know how much is ok, or when.

“When babies are new, you’re feeding them so frequently – I personally found it more hassle than it was worth to think about calculating my drinks, but later on there were times I did want to have a drink.

“I came to think about it like drinking and driving: if you really want to have a drink, you need to leave enough time – about two hours – for your body to process each standard drink you have.”

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

Jen reflects that there is a misconception about the length of time people should stop drinking alcohol for during their pregnancy journey.

“It’s not just the nine months of pregnancy that should be alcohol-free. Prior to conceiving, while trying to conceive, while pregnant, while breastfeeding – all of these stages matter when thinking about alcohol. I didn’t fully understand that until I was in it, and I’m not sure everyone realises.”

Jen said that educating everyone on the risks of drinking alcohol during pregnancy is important, especially when it comes to social situations where alcohol is offered.

“Being armed with information and strategies is so helpful when you feel even gently pressured to drink while pregnant or planning.

“I didn’t always know how to answer when people noticed I wasn’t drinking or suggested it might be ok to have just one. It’s great to have this campaign teaching people why every moment matters, so the person who is pregnant can just say, ‘No thanks’ without feeling they need to justify it.

“The more we all know about the guidelines and the risks, the better our whole society will be able to support people who are pregnant people and their babies.”

*In the coming months, we’ll be regularly sharing stories like Jen’s on our website.*[*Sign up to the FARE email list*](https://fare.org.au/action/)*to receive similar stories.*

*If you have experiences to share – short or long – that can help people know they’re not alone, please share your story through our*[*Voices of Change project*](https://fare.org.au/voicesofchange/)*.*