

Hints and tips when out with friends

You may find yourself in situations where people ask you why you're not drinking alcohol. These questions can be difficult to answer, especially when you're not ready to tell people that you're pregnant.

In these situations you could say one of the following:

- No, thank you, I'm not drinking tonight.
- No, thank you, but a juice would be wonderful.
- No, thank you. I have to drive.
- I have a big day/ early meeting tomorrow so no thanks.
- I'm not feeling the best so would rather not, thanks.

If people already know you're pregnant or you're happy to tell them you can simply say: No thanks, not while I'm pregnant. A good idea is also to get those closest to you to give you support in these situations. This could include saying that you're on a health kick together and not drinking alcohol.



Australian Government
Department of Health

Further information

Pregnancy, Birth and Baby Helpline **1800 822 438**
www.pregnancybirthbaby.org.au

Australian Breastfeeding Association
<https://www.breastfeeding.asn.au/bf-info/safe-when-breastfeeding/alcohol-and-breastfeeding>

National Health and Medical Research Council
<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/your-health/alcohol-guidelines>

If you are concerned about any of the issues raised in this leaflet you should consult your health professional.

About the Women Want to Know project

The *Women Want to Know* project was developed by the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) in collaboration with leading health professional bodies across Australia.

The *Women Want to Know* project was funded by the Australian Government Department of Health.

For more information on the *Women Want to Know* project visit www.alcohol.gov.au

fare
Foundation for Alcohol
Research & Education

Information for
women about
**pregnancy
& alcohol**





Pregnancy is an exciting time, a time when many women want to know what they can do to ensure that they and their baby are healthy.

One thing that is important in keeping you and your baby healthy is to avoid drinking alcohol while pregnant, planning pregnancy or breastfeeding. This leaflet will help you make an informed choice and provide the best advice for you and your baby.

This advice is consistent with that provided by the National Health and Medical Research Council, Australia's leading expert organisation on the development of national health advice and guidance.

When you are pregnant or planning pregnancy, not drinking alcohol is the safest option.

The National Health and Medical Research Council recommends that for women who are pregnant, planning pregnancy or breastfeeding not drinking alcohol is the safest option.

This is because no studies have found a safe level of alcohol consumption during pregnancy where damage may not occur.

Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can affect the unborn baby and increase the risk of miscarriage, lower birth weight, stillbirth and premature birth. Alcohol can also harm the development of the baby's brain and physical growth and some babies exposed to alcohol may be born with conditions known as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders or FASD. This is a term used to describe a group of conditions caused by alcohol use in pregnancy. Most children with FASD don't look different but can have a range of problems including brain damage, physical and emotional developmental delays, learning problems such as poor memory, being impulsive and having difficulties in controlling their behaviour.

When you are planning a pregnancy, it is also important to be aware that alcohol can reduce fertility in both men and women. Alcohol can greatly increase the time it takes to get pregnant and affect the quality of men's sperm and women's eggs. If you are trying to get pregnant you should consider not drinking alcohol at all.

If you have consumed alcohol while pregnant and are concerned, or are having trouble stopping drinking, you should talk to your doctor, midwife or obstetrician.

Many women don't know exactly when they become pregnant and many pregnancies are not planned and so it is possible that you might have been drinking alcohol before you were aware of your pregnancy. It is important to remember that it is never too late to stop drinking alcohol during pregnancy and the safest option is to be alcohol free during pregnancy or when breastfeeding. If you are finding it difficult to stop drinking or are concerned you should speak to your doctor, midwife or obstetrician for support and advice.

Speaking to a health professional about your drinking may seem daunting. It is important to remember that health professionals speak to lots of

people about these issues. Ultimately, they want the best for you and your baby. It is also important to talk to someone if you think you might be struggling with depression, stress or anxiety. Your health professional can refer you to services in your area to support you and your baby to be healthy.

Not drinking alcohol is also the safest option when breastfeeding.

Alcohol enters the breast milk and may stay there for several hours. Alcohol may affect milk production and this can cause babies to eat less and sleep less. Alcohol can also affect the baby's brain and spinal cord development which continue to grow after birth.

The Australian Breastfeeding Association recommends avoiding alcohol in the first month after birth until breastfeeding is well established. When a more regular feeding pattern is established you may be able to have alcohol between breastfeeds if you plan ahead and allow enough time for the alcohol to exit your system.

