

ALCOHOL & PREGNANCY

Let's all support an
alcohol-free pregnancy



WITH CHILD WITHOUT ALCOHOL

Expecting a new baby can be an exciting time. As a parent-to-be, partner, family member or friend, we can all support an alcohol-free pregnancy.



Alcohol is a commonly consumed product in Canada, but it is not without risk – risks that are higher when a person is pregnant. While it might seem easy to ‘just not drink’ during pregnancy, that isn’t always the case and it can be a struggle for many Manitobans.

Many people use alcohol to cope and some struggle with alcohol addiction. Some may not know the harms of drinking alcohol while pregnant and, without support or resources, it can be hard to stop drinking. But with the right support, an alcohol-free pregnancy can be possible.

The support of family, friends and loved ones can be instrumental in navigating a pregnancy. By making

sure you have the best information and tools to help support parents to be, you can be ready to play your part to support an alcohol-free pregnancy.

We hope that this resource guide will help you learn about the risks of consuming alcohol during pregnancy and will offer tips on how you can support pregnant loved ones in our community.

**TOGETHER, WE CAN
ALL SUPPORT AN
ALCOHOL-FREE
PREGNANCY.**

ALCOHOL, PREGNANCY & FASD

There is a lot of information to consider when welcoming a new baby. From strollers to nutrition, ensuring we are all making informed choices to support a healthy pregnancy can feel overwhelming.

But one thing medical experts agree on is that there is no known safe

amount of alcohol to consume during pregnancy.

They also know that drinking alcohol while pregnant can cause Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and that the risk of harm to a baby increases with the amount of alcohol consumed.



A baby's brain and body are developing for the entire pregnancy and drinking alcohol during this time can affect the way the baby grows. This may result in your child being born early, with low birth weight and possibly with FASD. Though using other substances may harm the growth and development of a baby in different ways, it is only alcohol that causes FASD.

One pregnancy can be very different from the next and no two babies are the same. A baby's development may be affected by a variety of factors including age, nutrition and genetics resulting in each baby being affected by alcohol differently. This is why it is important to remember that there is no known safe level of alcohol during pregnancy, regardless of what others' experiences may have been.

If you are planning to become pregnant, it is recommended to avoid alcohol. If you're already pregnant, know that it is never too late to make a change.

Adopting healthy behaviours, including stopping drinking, when you are able will help reduce the risks for your baby.



WHAT IS FASD?

FASD is a spectrum disorder, which means it can affect different people in different ways. Each person with FASD will have strengths and gifts to share and may need special support to help them succeed in their daily lives.

While the outcomes vary, FASD can often result in behavioural challenges related to learning, memory, attention, communication skills, managing emotions and social and motor skills. Some of these outcomes may be noticeable at birth while others might appear as the child grows.

A baby born with FASD may also require lifelong support related to

the physical health impacts that can accompany the disorder, such as heart, kidney and liver disease.

The exact outcome of consuming alcohol during pregnancy will be different for every developing baby, but all babies born with FASD have something in common – they will experience some combination of lifelong physical, learning, social and emotional disabilities.

The good news is that it is never too late to make a difference. Reducing or stopping drinking at any time during pregnancy lessens the chance a baby will be born with an alcohol-related disability.

WE CAN ALL SUPPORT AN ALCOHOL-FREE PREGNANCY

The most important role you have as a friend, family member or partner is continuing to show your love and support for the pregnant people in your life. You can do that by making small but meaningful changes that make sure they feel included and

respected during their pregnancy. Having the support of family or friends is one of the key reasons pregnant people are able to make and maintain healthy low-risk behaviours.

Here are some ideas you might want to try:



SUPPORT THEIR HEALTHY CHOICES AND BEHAVIOURS

Before, during and after pregnancy, you can offer encouragement when people make changes to their lifestyle like not drinking.



HAVE OTHER OPTIONS

Show your support by enjoying non-alcoholic drinks or a delicious mocktail when socializing with each other.



FIND NEW ROUTINES

Sometimes your usual routines might include alcohol so why not take this opportunity to suggest new activities or places to meet that are fun and don't include drinking.

Most importantly, do not judge. While it may sound easy to give up drinking during pregnancy, the reality is that it can be a struggle for many and one that is so much harder without support. Being critical of someone's choices may stop them from seeking help.

Take the time to chat with them, recognize their challenges and help them find the support they need.



FINDING HELP

If you have questions about how you can support or have a healthy pregnancy, talk to your health care provider, doctor or nursing station.

If you are pregnant or are supporting a person who is pregnant and want help with alcohol, please contact:

Addictions Foundation of Manitoba: toll-free 1-866-638-2561

Health Links-Info Santé: 204-788-8200 or toll-free 1-888-315-9257

Pregnancy Info (Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada):
pregnancyinfo.ca

Provincial Adult Addictions Information Line: call or text toll-free 1-855-662-6605

Youth Addictions Centralized Intake Service Line: toll-free 1-877-710-3999

To find mental health information and services, call:

First Nations & Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line: toll-free 1-855-242-3310 or chat at hopeforwellness.ca

Klinic Crisis Line: 204-786-8686 or toll-free 1-888-322-3019

Manitoba Farm and Rural Support Services: toll-free 1-866-367-3276



For information on programs about FASD, visit the Government of Manitoba at www.gov.mb.ca/fs/fasd/ or email FASDInfo@gov.mb.ca

Visit DrinkSense.ca for more resources about alcohol and pregnancy.



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MESSAGE FROM DR. HANLON-DEARMAN

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a lifelong condition that may result from a baby being exposed to alcohol before birth. This exposure to alcohol affects how the baby's brain and body develop.

Every person with FASD has unique strengths and challenges and needs special support to help them succeed in their daily lives. Diagnosis, combined with awareness and understanding, can help those living with FASD reach their full potential.

The Manitoba FASD Centre assesses children and adolescents who may be affected with FASD, providing diagnosis, a description of strengths and challenges and recommendations. Questions about referrals can be directed to our Diagnostic Coordinators.

The Centre also holds clinics throughout Manitoba including in Selkirk, Beausejour, Thompson, The Pas, Norway House Cree Nation, Brandon, Dauphin, Swan River, Portage la Prairie, Steinbach and Winnipeg.

While health care providers can support people with FASD, they can also help prevent alcohol-related harm. As friends, family members and partners, let's all try to create a supportive environment that will help the people in our lives have alcohol-free pregnancies.

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