

How to
help your family
member or friend
be an alcohol-free mother-to-be.



Give good advice that will help a woman or girl have a healthy baby.

You could be an aunt-to-be or a grandmother-to-be. You could be a mother, cousin, best friend, or a close co-worker to a woman or girl who is a mother-to-be.

If you are close to a woman or girl who is pregnant or who is thinking of getting pregnant who drinks alcohol, you can increase her chances to have a healthy baby if you help her stop drinking beverages that

contain alcohol. Tell her that drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause her child to have serious conditions called **fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD)**.

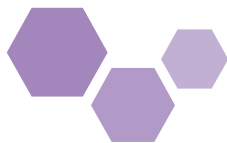
FASD covers a range of conditions that can be present in someone whose mother drank alcohol during pregnancy. These conditions can include physical and mental abnormalities and behavioral and learning difficulties that may cause problems throughout their entire life.

An FASD is a lifelong problem that cannot be cured; it does not go away.

Many pregnant women and girls know the dangers of smoking tobacco or using drugs, but they don't know that drinking alcohol, even in small amounts, can also hurt their babies. And many women and girls don't know how to ask for advice or for help with problems.

This brochure contains helpful suggestions on how you can talk to your friend or family member about this difficult but important subject. Please keep reading. **What you say can mean a lot. You will show her that you care about her and her future.**





Start the conversation.

Sometimes it is tough to start the conversation, but if you know that a pregnant friend or family member is drinking alcohol, your close relationship makes you a good person to give advice in a supportive way.

Here are some tips:

- Have the conversation in a private place where other people will not overhear.
- Begin by telling her that you care about her and her baby.
- Ease into it with talk about plans for the birth, such as getting a crib, clothes, and toys.
- Ask her if she has been to a doctor or clinic for prenatal care.
- Ask if she is taking prenatal vitamins and folic acid, and following other medical advice.
- Remind her that there are some things she should be careful NOT to do when she is pregnant:
 - Don't take any drugs (legal or illegal) without consulting her health provider or adviser.
 - Don't smoke cigarettes or use any tobacco products.
 - **Don't drink any type or any amount of alcohol.**



Alcohol and pregnancy don't mix.

Tell your daughter, sister, other family member or friend that drinking alcohol at any time during pregnancy can hurt her unborn baby. Give her important facts:

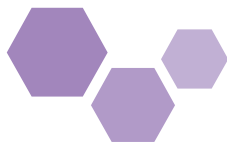
- Unborn babies cannot process alcohol as adults can, so if the mother drinks any alcohol she risks causing permanent damage to her unborn baby.



There is no safe time, no known safe amount, and no safe type of alcohol to drink during pregnancy.

Help her make the safe choice not to drink alcohol at all during her pregnancy.



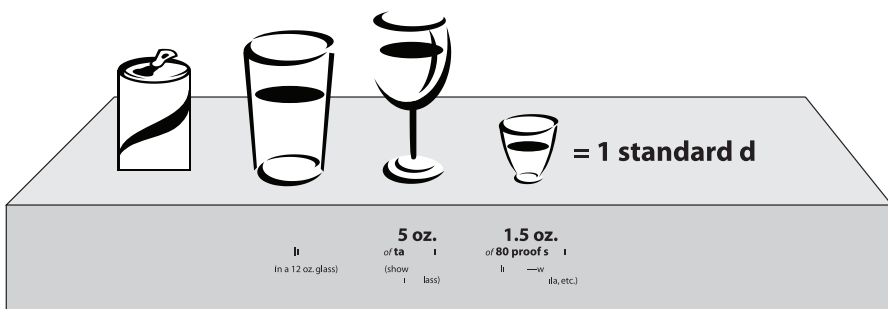


Get the picture.

Women and girls are more likely to talk to you about drinking when they don't have a motive to hide it, so it is important to be nonjudgmental, friendly, and helpful.

A bottle of beer, a glass of wine, home brew, a “forty,” hard lemonade, or “alcopops”^{*}—even some energy drinks—all carry the same risk as drinking a shot of liquor or a mixed drink made with a shot of hard liquor, because they all contain about the same amount of alcohol.

In addition, research has shown that most people do not know the size of a standard drink and that women typically “over-pour.” They pour drinks that are 50 percent more (100 percent more for hard liquor) than a standard drink,¹ so women and girls who think they drink moderate amounts of alcohol often drink much more than they think they are drinking.



It may be helpful to get a measuring cup and show your friend or family member what 5 ounces of wine or an ounce-and-a-half “shot” look like.

But for women and girls who are pregnant, NO ALCOHOL is best!

¹Witbrodt, J.; Kaskutas, L.A.; Korcha, R.; et al. Spring 2008. Under-estimation of alcohol consumption among women at-risk for drinking during pregnancy. *Contemporary Drug Problems* 35(1):37-58.

^{*}Alcopops are the popular name for sweetened, flavored alcoholic beverages usually sold in single-serving cans or bottles. They are the preferred alcoholic beverage of underage girls. Teens also call it “cheerleader beer” and “chick beer.”

The glass may be empty, but the drink can last a lifetime.

Any amount of drinking is harmful if a woman or girl is already pregnant or trying to become pregnant. Tell her—

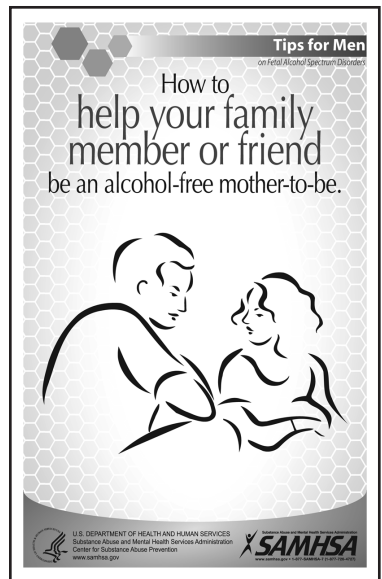
- ◆ Drinking any amount of alcohol during any part of her pregnancy can hurt the baby.
- ◆ Share some of the facts in this booklet and encourage her to stop drinking.
- ◆ Give her the companion booklet for pregnant women.
- ◆ If she says she drinks, ask if there are problems that cause her to want to drink alcohol.
- ◆ Ask her what would help her not to drink alcoholic beverages during her pregnancy.

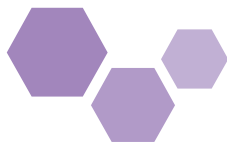
If she tells you that she has 3 or more standard drinks per “sitting,” or 5 or more drinks in a week, she is at risk for alcohol-related problems.

Help her connect with a counselor or support group if she needs help to stop drinking.

You can model healthy behavior by not drinking. Let her know that you are willing to help her have a healthy baby in any way you can.

You can help a pregnant family member or friend avoid alcohol-related problems—problems that may persist long after the drink is done.





Remind her that every pregnancy is different and every baby is different.

If your friend or family member says she drank during another pregnancy and the baby was okay, tell her that—

- Just because she drank alcohol during a previous pregnancy, there is no guarantee that she can drink alcohol and not affect the child in her current pregnancy.
- The effects of alcohol on an earlier child may be mild or unrecognized. A child with an FASD may—
 - Be born small and have problems eating and sleeping.
 - Have abnormal facial or physical features.
 - Have brain damage, which cannot be seen by looking at the baby.
 - Be clumsy and have difficulty learning how to do simple things and following multiple directions.
 - Find it difficult to pay attention and to learn, especially math.
 - Get into trouble with teachers because he or she cannot remember or understand instructions.
 - Have fights with siblings or classmates because his or her ability to function socially usually is years below the child's actual age.

An FASD lasts a lifetime. It cannot be cured, but it can be prevented.

There is no safe time, no known safe amount, and no safe type of alcohol to drink during pregnancy.

Help your friend or family member make the safe choice not to drink at all.

FASD “Top Five” Things To Consider About Pregnant Women and Girls Who Drink Alcohol

- 5 Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD) are caused by pregnant women and girls drinking alcohol. These conditions occur in children regardless of the community, family status, income, education, race, religion, or culture.
- 4 It is often hardest to recognize the people who need the most help; it is important to ask your pregnant relative or friend about how much they drink.
- 3 Drinking alcohol can damage an unborn baby at any and all stages of pregnancy.
- 2 There is no known amount or type of alcohol that is “safe” for a woman or girl to drink while she is pregnant.
- 1 **FASD is 100% preventable.**

FASD Center for Excellence
www.fasdcenter.samhsa.gov

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
www.samhsa.gov



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