

Avoiding Alcohol during Pregnancy

International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Awareness Day falls on 9 September 2020 and The Outer Hebrides Alcohol & Drug Partnership (ADP) and NHS Western Isles are using this opportunity to highlight the need to avoid drinking whilst pregnant.

It is estimated that around three in 100 babies born in the UK are affected by FASD and the effects are life-long. Children with FASD can have a range of mental, behavioural and learning disabilities as well as physical disabilities and specific facial characteristics. When drinking through pregnancy, the alcohol in the blood stream passes freely through the placenta into the developing baby. The fetus is completely unprotected from alcohol circulating in its blood system so the alcohol can destroy brain cells and damage the nervous system and other organs of the baby at any point during the pregnancy

There is no known safe amount of alcohol to drink whilst pregnant so to reduce the risk, the Chief Medical Officer advises that the safest approach for women who are planning a pregnancy, who may be pregnant or for those breastfeeding is to avoid alcohol completely. To ensure the unborn baby receives the best chance in life avoid drinking alcohol or using drugs, including smoking and stick to a healthy diet. If you have any concerns or any other issues, have a chat with your midwife or doctor who will offer advice.

For more information on FASD and why it is best to avoid alcohol during pregnancy or when trying for a baby visit <https://www.nhsinform.scot/ready-steady-baby/pregnancy/looking-after-yourself-and-your-baby/alcohol-and-pregnancy>.

NHS Western Isles Director of Public Health, Dr Maggie Watts, said: "Alcohol is the commonest preventable cause of disability

and its impact is lifelong. Avoiding alcohol when planning for and during pregnancy is ideal – and services are there to help if you find this difficult. You can speak to your midwife or GP, or look for services through the ADP website. Please don't take chances - give your baby the best start in life by going without alcohol for nine months."

For parents and carers of children and young people who may have already been affected by prenatal alcohol exposure visit the FASD Hub Scotland which offers information and support: <https://www.adoptionuk.org/Pages/FAQs/Site/scotland/Category/fasd-hub-scotland>

If you would like more information please contact the Outer Hebrides Alcohol and Drug Partnership Support Team on 01851 762022 or visit our website: www.outerhebadp.com

Planning for pregnancy?

Whether you are pregnant, or trying, the safest option is to stop drinking. Avoiding alcohol is best for you and your baby.

Alcohol is a toxin, avoiding it means less strain on your body, and less risk of miscarriage, problems for your baby's health and of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

#NoAlcoholNoRisk

45% of UK pregnancies are unplanned: alcohol-exposed pregnancy is avoidable.

You can plan to avoid pregnancy, or talk to your GP to get help to stop drinking.

#NoAlcoholNoRisk

#FASDAwarenessDay

Supporting a child with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder?

The FASD Hub Scotland is here to support you – their helpline and website have lots of information for parents and carers.

Call 0300 666 006
10am until 2.30pm Tues, Wed and Thurs

#FASDAwarenessDay

Drinking while pregnant, even early on, can harm you and your baby.

Alcohol is a toxin, and it can:

- Damage your baby's brain as they develop, causing problems throughout their life
- Raise the risk of miscarriage, early birth or underweight birth
- Cause Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

If you are worried about alcohol-exposed pregnancy you can speak with your GP or midwife for support.

#NoAlcoholNoRisk

Thinking about pregnancy?

Talk to your GP or Sexual Health Clinic for help and advice planning contraception, and your future.

Alcohol-exposed pregnancy is a risk nobody needs. The good news? It's avoidable.

Alcohol is a toxin, and can affect your health and your baby's – harming their development, and affecting their learning and behaviour as they grow.

#NoAlcoholNoRisk

What is FASD?

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a complex condition caused by alcohol exposure during pregnancy.

It can affect people's learning, behaviour and physical health throughout their lives.

Find out more about how FASD affects people and the support available.

#FASDAwarenessDay

Is Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) a problem in Scotland?

Around 1 in 20 children in Scotland are affected by FASD, a preventable condition that can affect them their whole lives.

Find out more about how FASD affects people and the support available.

#FASDAwarenessDay

We now know FASD affects as many as 5% of children in Scotland.

But it's still poorly understood.

FASD can affect physical and mental health, as well as behaviour. People living with FASD, and their families, need appropriate support.

If you're a professional working with FASD you can contact the Fetal Alcohol Advisory and Support Team.

#FASDAwarenessDay