



FASD

LET'S

CHANGE THE
conversation



Raising Awareness and Understanding

saskatchewan
preventioninstitute
our goal is **healthy** children



FASD: Let's Change the Conversation

Up to 4% of Canadians have Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. Preventing FASD is more complex than recommending no alcohol use during pregnancy. FASD can happen in any community or group where alcohol is used.

With approximately 1 in 25 Canadians having FASD, chances are you know someone with FASD; a neighbour, a friend, or a relative. You might not even know it. Looking at the bigger picture of FASD helps people move away from the shame, blame, stigma, and discrimination of FASD. The best way to make a difference is to support women, individuals with FASD, and their families. Supporting women can include learning about the reasons they may use alcohol in pregnancies.

Each person with FASD has different strengths and challenges. Each person will need different supports. Each person with FASD can have successes.

References available upon request.

What is FASD?

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a diagnostic term used to describe impacts on the brain and body of individuals prenatally exposed to alcohol. FASD is a lifelong disability. Individuals with FASD will experience some degree of challenges in their daily living, and

may need support with motor skills, physical health, learning, memory, attention, communication, emotional regulation, and social skills to reach their full potential. Each individual with FASD is unique and has areas of both strengths and challenges (CanFASD, 2018).

Alcohol is used in pregnancy for many reasons

The reasons a woman may use alcohol before she is pregnant are still there the day the pregnancy test is positive. There are many reasons for prenatal alcohol use, such as:

- Unplanned pregnancy and alcohol was used before pregnancy confirmation
- Use of alcohol while planning a pregnancy and until pregnancy is confirmed
- Depression
- Partner's drinking behaviour
- Drinking is normal in her society/group/community/family/friends
- Social pressure to drink from families and friends
- Stigma and being afraid to talk about alcohol use because of shame and blame
- Abuse
- Violence
- Confusing messages about alcohol and pregnancy
- To cope with trauma or difficult life situations
- Drinking habit, dependency, or substance use disorder
- Mental health challenges
- Not knowing that alcohol can harm the baby
- Some doctors say that it's okay to drink a little in pregnancy
- Knowing other women who drank during pregnancy whose children appear healthy
- To relax or reduce stress
- Ways of drinking before becoming pregnant (e.g., risky drinking, drinking every day)
- Indifference or being unhappy about the pregnancy
- Family history of alcohol abuse
- Inadequate or no prenatal care

Shame and blame don't work

Many people know that it is healthiest for both mother and baby when alcohol is not used in pregnancy. However, many people don't know that shame and blame do not change the many reasons alcohol might be used during pregnancy. In fact, shame and blame (stigma) are often reasons people don't ask for help, talk about alcohol use, or go for prenatal care. When we make it easier to talk about prenatal alcohol use, we make it easier for people to get help, be as healthy as possible, and have healthier pregnancies. Removing stigma will make it easier for people to ask for help.

PARTNERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE



It is easier for a pregnant woman to not use alcohol when her partner supports her. This includes a partner not drinking or cutting back on drinking when they are trying to get pregnant, and during the pregnancy. It is also a healthy start for baby when both mom and dad see their healthcare professionals when they decide to have children.

When a woman who is pregnant lives with someone who drinks heavily, she is more likely to use alcohol. It is also harder for a pregnant woman to stop using alcohol if:

- she is forced to drink by her partner
- she is abused by her partner
- she is using alcohol to deal with stress or depression

A father's alcohol use does not cause FASD. Researchers have found that a father's alcohol use can cause changes to:

- his sperm (e.g., how they look, how many, and ability to penetrate the egg)
- the genes (DNA) he passes on to his baby
- epigenetics (which genes are turned on or off)

Research also shows that a father's alcohol use might make the fetus more vulnerable to prenatal alcohol exposure. However, more research is needed in this area.

“ FASD: Faith ... Ability ... Strength ... Determination ”

Myles Himmelreich, a motivational speaker with FASD, gives another view of FASD: Faith, Ability, Strength, and Determination. When raising awareness of FASD, it is better to talk about strengths and challenges. This helps to understand needs and how to provide help. Focusing on problems builds stigma for people with FASD and their families.

Parents of children with FASD want to help their children do well. Families that have supports tend to do better. Secondary challenges can be prevented if an individual's primary disabilities are well supported. Recommendations for supports work best when they consider the child's specific needs and they line up with the supports that are available in the community.



Myles Himmelreich

ALCOHOL USE AFFECTS EVERY PERSON AND PREGNANCY DIFFERENTLY

Alcohol affects every person's body differently. Alcohol also affects every fetus (unborn baby) differently. That is why each person with FASD has different strengths and challenges. Here are some reasons:

- Health of mother (food, exercise, prenatal vitamins, and illnesses)
- How much alcohol is used at a time (a lot or a little)
- What part of the baby is developing when alcohol is used
- DNA (genetics) of mother and father
- Depression, stress, violence, poverty, or trauma
- Where she lives, learns, works, and socializes (social determinants of health)

Working together for success for children with FASD (protective factors)

Protective factors for children with FASD include:

- getting a diagnosis before 6 years of age
- having a loving, nurturing, and unchanging home with no violence
- getting help from special education and social services when needed
- building on strengths of the child

FASD and the brain

The brain is continually changing and adapting. This is called neuroplasticity. Although areas of the brain may be affected before birth, the brain has an amazing way of working around this. When the brain is affected by alcohol prenatally, it may not work the way that it might have if it wasn't exposed. It may take a lot of practice to learn something in a different way, but the brain can learn new ways of working.

Research is providing hope that effective therapies can have a positive impact on the harm caused by prenatal exposure to alcohol.

Alcohol can make changes in fetal development

During pregnancy, alcohol can affect **any** part of the baby's developing body. This includes the brain. The brain develops for all 9 months of pregnancy.

Alcohol's effects to the brain and body can happen before a woman knows she is pregnant.

When alcohol affects the brain, it can make a child's growing and learning harder. Alcohol can cause challenges with:

- motor skills
- brain structure and functioning
- thinking, reasoning, and understanding
- language
- achieving educational goals
- memory
- attention
- executive function (ability to plan, pay attention, remember instructions, and manage many tasks), impulse control, and hyperactivity
- affect regulation (ability to change emotions to meet the demands of the environment), including anxiety, depression, and mood dysregulation (severe and frequent outbursts with change of mood between the outbursts)
- adaptive behaviour (ability to change behaviour to get along with others), social skills, or social communication

Other parts of the baby that are developing when alcohol is used can be affected. There may be problems with:

- hearing
- seeing
- sleeping
- feeding
- heart, kidneys, bones

Reducing harm

It is never too late to reduce harm by quitting drinking or cutting back on drinking. It is not easy to stop drinking if it is a habit or a dependency. Working on changes before pregnancy can make it easier. When a partner, family, and friends are supportive, it is not as difficult to make changes. Healthcare professionals and counsellors can also help.

What if an unborn baby has been exposed to alcohol?

If a baby has been prenatally exposed to alcohol, talking to a healthcare provider and watching for any physical or developmental challenges can help protect the baby. Putting early supports in place, getting a diagnosis when the time is right, and supporting the family may help prevent some secondary challenges.

How much alcohol is safe to use in pregnancy?

Science shows that alcohol use in pregnancy can affect the unborn baby. There is not enough evidence to show a safe amount of alcohol use. The safest choice is no alcohol.

Ideas for women to help have a healthy baby

- Take prenatal vitamins before and during pregnancy. They help keep you and your baby healthy.
- Use birth control that works well if you are having sex and do not want a baby now.
- If you and your partner think you might be pregnant, get a pregnancy test. Do your best to not use alcohol until you know you are not pregnant.
- If you are pregnant, do your best to not use alcohol.
- Talk to someone for help if you find it hard to not use alcohol.
- Partners, family, and friends can support women to be healthy.

For help, talk to:

- a doctor, nurse, or health centre
- Saskatchewan HealthLine at 811
- addictions services where you live
- someone who you trust

These people are here to support everyone's health: mothers, fathers, and babies.

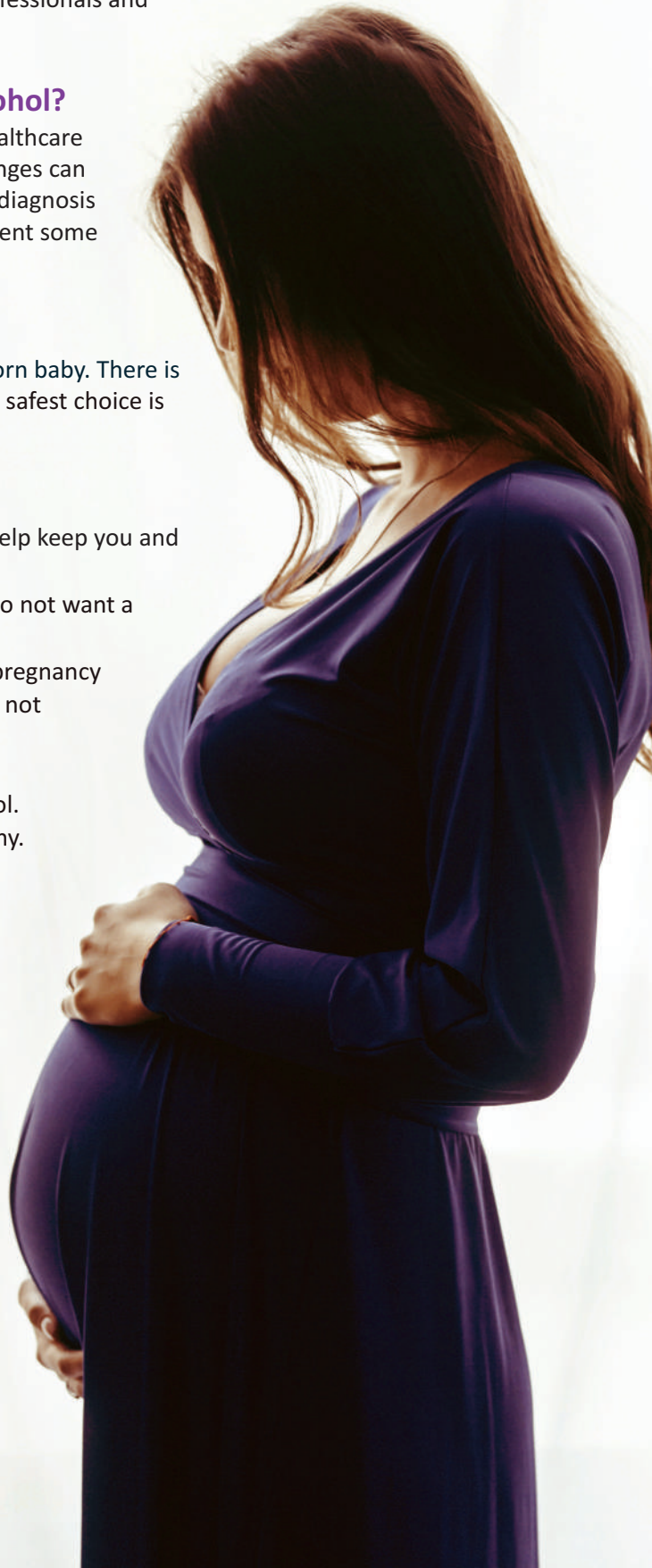
For more information:

(www.canfasd.ca)

- Canada FASD Research Network (CanFASD)
- Language Guide: Promoting dignity for those impacted by FASD
- Common Messages: Guidelines for talking and writing about FASD

(www.myleshimmelreich.com)

- Myles Himmelreich



WHAT ARE SOME EVENT IDEAS FOR FASD AWARENESS

1. Serve Mocktails

Many communities serve Mocktails (non-alcoholic cocktails) as an alternative to alcoholic drinks. You can ask grocery stores or SLGA outlets for permission to serve the Mocktails.** You can also give out recipes for the Mocktails. There are many Mocktail recipes online. Best Start has recipes at

<https://resources.beststart.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/A19-E.pdf>.

The Prevention Institute has some of these recipe booklets available to order.

You can put labels with information about alcohol, alcohol and pregnancy, and alcohol and men on the cups you use for the Mocktails to start conversations. You can email the Prevention Institute (info@skprevention.ca) for label templates.

Here are some Mocktails that are not expensive. Thank you to Battle River Treaty 6 Health Centre for sharing these recipes.

Shirley Temple

- Put 2 oz. orange juice in a glass with ice
- Top with 2 oz. Sprite, Ginger Ale, or 7 Up
- Garnish with a slice of orange or lemon, if desired



Chocolate Love

- In a coffee mug, put 2 oz. warm milk, 1 tbsp. chocolate sauce, and 4 oz. decaffeinated hot coffee
- Stir to mix
- Garnish with an orange slice, if desired

Cranberry or Grape Chill

- Fill a glass half full of cold cranberry or grape juice
- Fill the glass to the top with cold sparkling soda, Sprite, Ginger Ale, or 7 Up

***Please note: If you would like to serve Mocktails or have FASD Awareness information in an SLGA retail liquor outlet, contact SLGA for permission:*

Jim Selinger, A/Sr. Director

Liquor Store Operations

Email: jselinger@slga.gov.sk.ca

Phone: 306-787-4237

Private liquor stores can be approached separately.

2. Hold a Mocktail Contest

- a) You can supply the glasses, lemon and lime wedges, and a variety of juices, cocktail syrups, and pop. Participants can create a Mocktail from the ingredients.

Choose two or three people to be judges. They can sample the drinks and decide on the winning recipe. The winning recipe and creator's name could be posted online, placed on bulletin boards, or sent to the local newspaper. If you are posting or printing the recipe, include some prevention messages.

The prize can be a gift certificate, a basket of baby items, or a basket with fancy glasses, juices, lemons, oranges, syrups, pop, and other ingredients for Mocktails.

- b) Ask people to submit Mocktail recipes. You could choose three finalists and then serve these Mocktails at an event and have people vote on the best recipe. The person who submits the winning recipe wins a prize.

3. Official Proclamation of FASD

The Government of Saskatchewan endorses FASD Awareness Day each year. Send a letter to your Mayor or Tribal Council to ask for an official proclamation of FASD Awareness Day in your community. There is a sample letter at the end of this document.

4. Host a Health Fair

Host a health fair in your community and have a booth with information about FASD. You can invite people from the community. You can get information from both the Saskatchewan Prevention Institute and the FASD Network of Saskatchewan. Get more people dropping by your booth by adding a game, activity, or giveaway (e.g., Low-Risk Drinking Guideline cups).

5. Host a Presentation

Invite the community to a presentation about FASD prevention and awareness. You can contact the Saskatchewan Prevention Institute (info@skprevention.ca) if you want to book a speaker. If you are looking for a speaker about support and strategies, contact the FASD Network of Saskatchewan (training@fasdnetwork.ca).

6. Advertise With T-Shirts

Wear FASD: Let's Change the Conversation t-shirts at your event. You can order some of these t-shirts from the Prevention Institute (resources@skprevention.ca). You can also wear the t-shirts while at work. These t-shirts may start conversations about FASD.

7. Take a Photo for Social Media

Take a picture of yourself. Post the picture to social media and write: FASD: Let's Change the Conversation. #FASD #FASDay #FASDMonth #FASDAwareness

8. Distribute Information

Distribute FASD awareness information to medical clinics, doctors' offices, stores, or restaurants.

9. Celebrate FASD Awareness Day

Celebrate FASD Awareness Day with a cultural practice that is appropriate for your community.

10. Poster Contest

Use the Prevention Institute's recommended FASD prevention messages for a poster contest.

11. Distribute Gum with Messages

Buy packages of gum to distribute. Put the Prevention Institute's recommended FASD awareness messages on the packages.

12. Hold Community BreakFASD

Hold a community BreakFASD. A BreakFASD is a breakfast but spelled with FASD to raise awareness of FASD. You could serve pancakes or bacon and eggs, bannock and jam, or anything people would enjoy for breakfast. Have the participants answer a quiz to get the BreakFASD.

13. Hold Community FASD Awareness Walk

Hold a Community FASD Day Awareness Walk. People can make signs and carry them on the walk. You may need a permit for the walk. Contact your local municipal office and/or talk to the local police about a permit.

14. Hold Community BBQ

Hold a community BBQ. Have the participants answer a quiz question for entrance or hold a contest to see who has the most correct answers.

15. Create a Placemat

Create a placemat with FASD awareness messaging. Contact local restaurants to see if they will use your placemats. You may even be able to find a few restaurants that are willing to pay for the printing of the placemats that they will be using.

16. Put Up Banners

Put up banners in the community with the Prevention Institute's recommended FASD prevention messages.

17. Make FASD Knots

Make FASD knots and give to people at your event. Instructions can be found at <http://www.come-over.to/FASDAY/manual.htm#10>.

The FASD knot was designed by Bonnie Buxton and Brian Philcox. It is worn on the chest to support and let people know about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. It is a sign that the person wearing the knot supports FASD prevention and people with FASD. The chord is tied in a knot known as a reef knot or Canadian knot.

The knot symbolizes the following:

- Cord with worn ends symbolizes the umbilical cord. The baby receives good things such as oxygen and food through the umbilical cord. If alcohol is used in pregnancy, the baby receives the alcohol through the cord. The cord can also represent the central nervous system (brain) which can be permanently harmed by the alcohol.
- This type of knot is so strong that it will not break if you try to pull it apart. In fact it will pull tighter. This symbolizes the strong support that we want to give pregnant women and people with FASD.
- The circle inside the knot symbolizes the uterus, the environment for the unborn baby.



(<http://www.farrsa.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/WhyFASDKnot.pdf>)

18. Participate in Social Media

Participate in social media conversations, such as on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn using these hashtags: #FASD #FASDay #FASDMonth #FASDAwareness. You can use some of the sample messaging and images found in this resource.

19. Plan a Pregnant Pause

Plan a Pregnant Pause. A pregnant pause is a one-minute freeze done by a group of people in a public space. Participants (both male and female) have balloons under their shirts so that they look pregnant. At a specific predetermined moment, they all freeze in place and do not move at all for one minute. People around the freeze group will be drawn to this unusual behaviour and quietly stare or ask questions. When one minute is up, all the participants will suddenly continue what they were doing before the freeze. At this time, freeze participants can hand out information and talk to the public.

Sample letter of request for proclamation:

(Date)

(Address
Address
Address)

Dear (Name of person),

On behalf of (name of your organization), we are asking that (Municipality or First Nation) proclaim September 9 as "Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Awareness Day". This year we want to Change the Conversation about FASD and increase understanding and support for families and individuals.

There are many reasons for prenatal alcohol use:

- Normalization of alcohol use in Saskatchewan
- Unplanned pregnancy and alcohol use
- Partner's drinking behaviour
- Depression
- Social environment
- Stigma
- Violence
- Trauma
- Use of alcohol until pregnancy confirmation
- Confusing information about alcohol and pregnancy
- Lack of support for alcohol-free pregnancy
- Addiction/alcohol dependence
- Mental health

People with FASD are resilient and have many strengths. They also have challenges. They (and their families) often experience misunderstanding and stigma. Without appropriate supports and understanding, individuals with FASD can experience: challenges with school; high rates of mental health challenges; violence; and substance use difficulties.

Early diagnosis, providing the right types of long-lasting supports, and reducing stigma around FASD can lead to healthier communities. When strengths and challenges are not appropriately understood and supported, people with FASD are at greater risk for problems with school, involvement with the law, family problems, and homelessness.

Join us in increasing understanding and knowledge.

We are requesting FASD Awareness Day be proclaimed on September 9. We would appreciate receiving notification of the proclamation by (insert date).

Respectfully submitted on behalf of (name of organization).

Signature(s)

What are things to think about when planning an FASD Awareness event?

Here are some questions to help with planning:

1. What is the date for your event? (Will people be around or are there other things happening?)

2. What is your goal? (What are you trying to accomplish?)

3. Who is your target audience? (General public, educators, healthcare providers, women, men, youth)

4. What will you do to achieve your goal?

5. What is your budget?

6. Who can partner with you or help you?

7. What is the timeline for your tasks and activities?

8. Who will do each task or activity?

9. Where are you holding your event and what is another location if your first choice does not work?

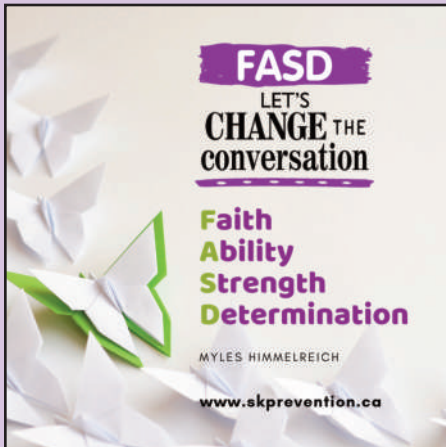
10. Whom can you contact in the media to promote your event?

11. How will you know it is a success?

Give lots of notice for your event through announcements, posters, contacting newspaper and radio stations, and using social media.

FASD AWARENESS MESSAGING

(To download camera-ready artwork for social media messaging, click on artwork boxes.)



FASD: Let's Change the Conversation
Faith Ability Strength Determination
(Myles Himmelreich)



FASD: Let's Change the Conversation
How have you supported
alcohol-free pregnancies?



FASD: Let's Change the Conversation
Healthy communities
support healthy pregnancies.



FASD: Let's Change the Conversation
What mental health and addictions
supports are in your area?



FASD: Let's Change the Conversation
Supporting people with mental health and
addiction challenges helps prevent FASD.



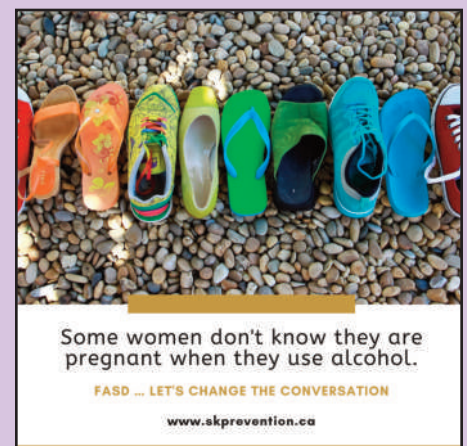
FASD: Let's Change the Conversation
Shame and blame don't work for anyone.
Help and support do!



FASD: Let's Change the Conversation
How have you changed your drinking to
support a pregnant partner or friend?



FASD: Let's Change the Conversation
FASD is a shared responsibility. Let's all
support healthy pregnancies.



FASD: Let's Change the Conversation
Some women don't know they are pregnant
when they use alcohol.

FASD AWARENESS MESSAGING



FASD: Let's Change the Conversation
Fathers play an important role in supporting healthy pregnancies and raising healthy children.



FASD: Let's Change the Conversation
When people with FASD know their strengths and challenges, they can understand what supports they may need.



FASD: Let's Change the Conversation
When we work together in useful ways to support people with FASD, we can make a difference.



FASD: Let's Change the Conversation
People with FASD have strengths as well as challenges. Let's build on strengths.



FASD: Let's Change the Conversation
Alcohol affects every person's body and every pregnancy differently. There is no known safe amount of alcohol use during pregnancy.



FASD: Let's Change the Conversation
FASD can happen in any community or group where alcohol is used.




FASD: Let's Change the Conversation
Approximately 4% of Canadians have Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. (CanFASD)



FASD: Let's Change the Conversation
Using alcohol can affect the fetus even before the pregnancy is confirmed.

FASD AWARENESS MESSAGING



Did you know that trauma, abuse, mental health, stress, and no supports are reasons for alcohol use in pregnancy?

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FASD: Let's Change the Conversation
Did you know that trauma, abuse, mental health, stress, and no supports are reasons for alcohol use in pregnancy?

FASD: Let's Change the Conversation
Did you know?
Many of the reasons for drinking before pregnancy don't suddenly disappear when someone becomes pregnant. These reasons may be why someone uses alcohol in pregnancy.

Did You Know?



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A pregnant woman is more likely to stop using alcohol when her partner cuts back or stops drinking as well.

Partners play an important role.

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