



**Information you  
might not know about**

**pregnancy,  
breastfeeding  
and alcohol**



**every moment  
matters**

**fare**  
Foundation for Alcohol  
Research & Education

## Congratulations on your pregnancy!

All parents want to give their baby the best start in life. That's why it's important not to drink any alcohol during pregnancy.

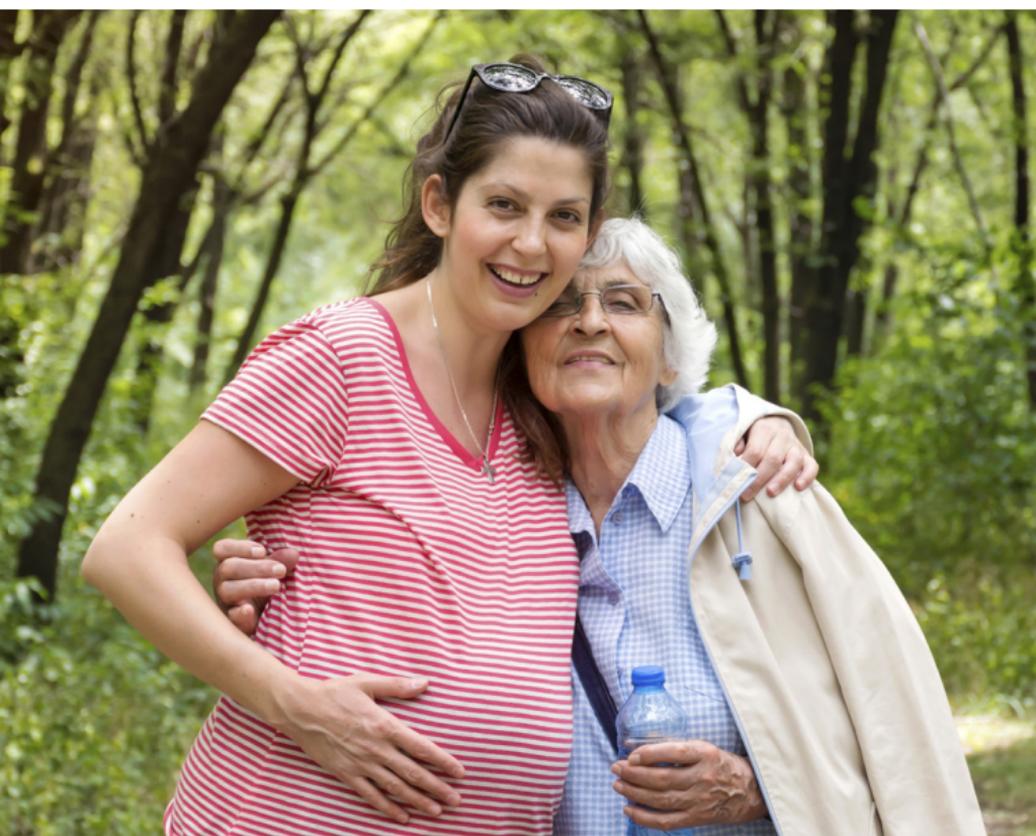
**At every stage of pregnancy, any alcohol you drink passes directly to your baby.**

Drinking alcohol during pregnancy presents risks for you and your developing baby, including:

- Increased risk of miscarriage.
- Increased risk of stillbirth, premature birth and low birth weight.
- Increased risk of damage to the baby's developing brain, body and organs.
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).



If you are concerned about this advice or want more information, talk to your doctor, midwife or obstetrician. Help is available.





The National Health and Medical Research Council's Australian Guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol advise that:

- If you are pregnant or planning a pregnancy, you should not drink alcohol, and
- When breastfeeding, not drinking alcohol is safest for your baby.

You can find out more about staying alcohol-free during pregnancy and while breastfeeding at **[everymomentmatters.org.au](https://www.everymomentmatters.org.au)**.



**When breastfeeding, ensure the breastmilk your baby drinks is always alcohol-free.**

If you drink alcohol, it enters your breastmilk from your blood. While there is alcohol in your blood, it is also in your milk.

The only way to eliminate alcohol from breastmilk is to wait for your body to process the alcohol. This takes up to two hours per standard drink.

Learn more about standard drinks at **[fare.org.au/resources/tips-and-tools](https://www.fare.org.au/resources/tips-and-tools)**.

It's important to feed your baby milk that is free from alcohol because:

- Even small amounts of alcohol can disrupt your baby's sleep.
- Alcohol can reduce milk supply and affect the flow of milk, making feeding more difficult for your baby.
- Alcohol can damage their developing brain, which is more vulnerable to alcohol than an adult brain.
- Alcohol has been linked to reductions in their verbal IQ, lower cognitive ability and slowed growth in early childhood.

If you drink alcohol, it is recommended that you avoid it when you are first establishing breastfeeding to ensure your baby receives a good supply of milk and settles into a sleep-wake pattern. This can take four weeks or more.

As your baby grows, it is safest to avoid alcohol while you continue to breastfeed. If you do drink alcohol there are steps you can take to prevent your baby from drinking breastmilk containing alcohol.



# How to protect your baby from breastmilk containing alcohol

- Wait a minimum of two hours per standard drink before feeding your baby to ensure your milk is alcohol-free.
- Use the FeedSafe app to know when your breastmilk is alcohol-free. FeedSafe uses your weight and height to calculate when your milk is alcohol free. See [feedsafe.net](https://feedsafe.net).
- Express breastmilk before you drink alcohol so that your baby can be fed by bottle.

Remember, while there is alcohol in your breastmilk, you can express for comfort and to maintain supply but this milk should be discarded.



# More information and support

Learn more about staying alcohol-free in pregnancy and feeding your baby breastmilk that does not contain alcohol: [everymomentmatters.org.au](https://everymomentmatters.org.au)

## Australian Breastfeeding Association

Information and support about breastfeeding and alcohol

[breastfeeding.asn.au](https://breastfeeding.asn.au)

1800 686 268

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## Feed Safe App

Mobile app to assist breastfeeding mothers who drink alcohol

[feedsafe.net](https://feedsafe.net)

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## Pregnancy, Birth and Baby Helpline

Advice from maternal child health nurses on pregnancy and parenting children up to school age

1800 822 436

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## National Health and Medical Research Council Australian Guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking alcohol

Evidence-based advice on the health effects of drinking alcohol

[nhmrc.gov.au/alcohol](https://nhmrc.gov.au/alcohol)

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Learn more about FARE at [fare.org.au](https://fare.org.au)

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