Eyes on

Alcohol use during pregnancy:
A dangerous “cocktail”
What do we know?

- The many negative effects of alcohol consumption during pregnancy are increasingly well known and affect about one in 100 children in Canada. This rate may be much higher in some First Nations and Inuit communities.

- Frequent consumption of alcohol during pregnancy can lead to complex health and developmental problems in children including physical malformations, delayed growth, as well as severe intellectual and behavioural problems.

- Consuming large amounts of alcohol daily (approximately 5 or more drinks) during pregnancy, even only occasionally, can have serious negative effects on the growth of children, and their visual and brain development.

- These children may have difficulty paying attention or planning a task and they may have special difficulty with subjects such as arithmetic.

- These children may also have difficulty managing their emotions and developing good social skills.

"I never used to drink alcohol when I was pregnant because I knew what would go wrong."

... alcohol consumption during pregnancy, which can harm your child’s development.

Paying attention to... What can be done?

- Avoid alcohol completely during pregnancy.
- Talk to your prenatal worker, midwife or other maternity care provider to support you as you try to stop drinking. Involve supportive friends, family and elders to help you. If you are a teenage mother, talk to the principal about what help can be provided at school.
- Consult a health professional if you have consumed alcohol while pregnant.
- Accept help provided by the healthcare system to support you.
- See a professional if you are worried about your child’s development in order to get the appropriate care and services for his/her optimal development.

... the reality that parenting a child suffering from the negative effects of alcohol can be demanding.

"If we got pregnant, I would like him [my husband] to support me too in not drinking when I was pregnant."

Healthy Messages & Métis: Does one size fit all? NAHO Métis Centre in collaboration with Métis Nation BC, 2009, p. 16.
Information

The Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development identifies and summarizes the best scientific work on the social and emotional development of young children. It disseminates this knowledge to a variety of audiences in formats and languages adapted to their needs.


This information sheet is published by the Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development, one of four Centres of Excellence for Children’s Well-Being. Funding for the Centres of Excellence is provided by the Public Health Agency of Canada. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors/researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official views of the Public Health Agency of Canada.

We are grateful to the Fondation Lucie et André Chagnon and the Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research for their financial contributions to produce this information sheet.

Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development

GRIP-Université de Montréal
P.O. Box 6128, Succursale Centre-ville
Montreal, Quebec H3C 3J7
Telephone: 514.343.6111, extension 2576
Fax: 514.343.6962
E-mail: cedje-ceecd@umontreal.ca
Website: www.excellence-earlychildhood.ca