

Eyes on



Alcohol use during pregnancy: a dangerous “cocktail”



PARENTS



Centre of Excellence
for Early Childhood
Development

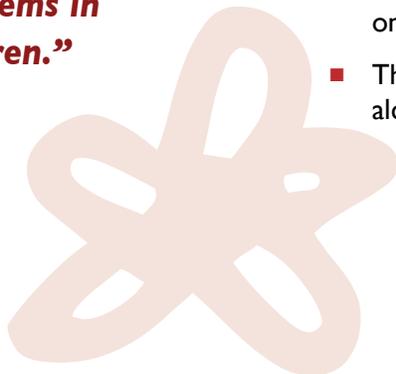
STRATEGIC KNOWLEDGE
CLUSTER ON EARLY
child development



“Frequent consumption of alcohol during pregnancy can lead to severe health, cognitive, behavioural, and emotional problems in children.”

What do we know?

- Alcohol use during pregnancy is a global health problem.
- The negative effects of alcohol use affect about 5% of children, and has been identified in all racial and cultural groups.
- No safe drinking limits during pregnancy have been established. Therefore, the most direct way to prevent the negative effects of alcohol exposure on children is for women who are pregnant or planning to become pregnant to stop drinking alcohol.
- Frequent consumption of alcohol during pregnancy can lead to the following severe problems in children.
 - **Health:** low birth weight, physical malformations and delayed growth.
 - **Cognitive:** deficits in language, memory and problem solving.
 - **Behavioural:** attention difficulty, impulsivity and hyperactivity.
 - **Emotional:** irritability, greater reactivity to stress and negative feeling.
- These problems can persist over time and may lead to additional ones later in life (e.g. underemployment and mental illnesses).
- The risk of increasing the symptoms is even more important when alcohol use is combined with malnutrition during pregnancy.



Paying attention to...

What can be done?

... your alcohol consumption before and during pregnancy.

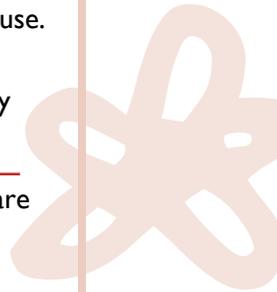
- Avoid drinking alcohol during the period you are trying to become pregnant.
- Stop drinking alcohol completely during pregnancy.
- Ask for help from a professional and seek support from your life partner or family members if you find it hard to stop drinking.

... having a healthy diet.

- Consider taking dietary supplements before, during and after pregnancy. It may reduce the severity of symptoms in children affected by prenatal alcohol use.
- Consult a health professional (pharmacist) before taking any dietary supplements.

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

- Accept help provided by the healthcare system to support you.
- If you are worried about your child's development, ask a professional to help you get appropriate care and services. The earlier problems are identified, the better.
- Involve the entire family in group interventions. A good quality and stable family environment is essential.





Informations

This information sheet is a publication of the Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development (CEECD) and the Strategic Knowledge Cluster on Early Child Development (SKC-ECD). These organizations identify and summarize the best scientific work on early childhood development. They disseminate this knowledge to a variety of audiences in formats and languages adapted to their needs.

For a more in-depth understanding of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD), consult our synthesis and experts' articles on this topic in the Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development, available free of charge at www.child-encyclopedia.com.

Several organizations financially support the CEECD and the SKC-ECD, including the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Université Laval, and private foundations. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the official policies of these organizations.

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, and to the Margaret & Wallace McCain Family Foundation for its financial support on this revised edition.

Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development Strategic Knowledge Cluster on Early Child Development

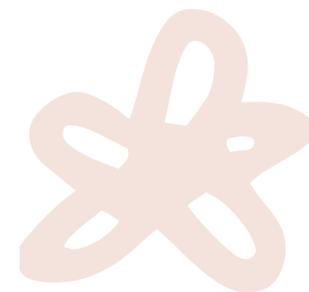
Université de Montréal
3050, Édouard-Montpetit Blvd., GRIP
P.O. Box 6128, succursale Centre-ville
Montreal, Quebec H3C 3J7

Telephone: 514-343-6111, extension 2541
Fax: 514-343-6962

E-mail: cedje-ceed@umontreal.ca

Websites: www.excellence-earlychildhood.ca and www.skc-ecd.ca

In this document, the masculine form is used merely to simplify the text. No discrimination is intended.



Coordinator:
Valérie Bell

Collaborators:
Mélanie Joly
Sarah-Louise Fraser
Kristell Le Martret
Mary J. O'Connor
Isabelle Vinet (CPEQ)

Copy editor:
Lana Crossman

Graphic design:
DesJardins Conception Graphique inc.

