

Healthy Babies, Strong Futures: How Men Can Help Pregnant Women Be Alcohol Free

Native men play important roles in their communities and families and can help make positive changes in both places. Whether you are a husband, a partner, a relative, or a friend of a woman of childbearing age, you can help give her the support, encouragement, and information she may need to have a healthy baby with a life full of potential.

This information sheet helps to define “fetal alcohol spectrum disorders” (FASD) and provides strategies you can use to help prevent FASD in your family and community.

What Is FASD?

“FASD” is a term that describes a range of lifelong effects that can occur in someone whose mother drank alcohol during pregnancy. Children whose mothers drank during pregnancy may need surgeries to fix physical problems. They may also have brain damage that can make it hard to remember things or solve problems. They may not be able to follow simple instructions or form friendships. These challenges may make it difficult to focus in school or follow everyday routines. Every year, at least 40,000 babies are born with an FASD.*

Facts To Remember and Share

The following are important facts to remember and share about FASD and drinking alcohol during pregnancy:

- ❖ FASD is permanent. It cannot be cured.
- ❖ FASD is 100 percent preventable. If a woman doesn’t drink when she’s pregnant, her baby will not have an FASD.
- ❖ There is no known safe time, safe amount, or safe type of alcohol to drink while pregnant. Beer and wine are just as harmful as hard liquor.
- ❖ If a pregnant woman stops drinking as soon as possible, she can improve her chances of having a healthy baby.



Strategies

The following are some general strategies that can help you get the word out about FASD; make you a better husband, partner, relative, or friend; and strengthen your community.

- ❖ **Information is power.** Read up on FASD in this resource kit, on the computer, or at the library. Share the information with friends and family members.
- ❖ **Set an example.** A father's drinking does not contribute directly to the risk of FASD, but women are more likely to drink if their male partners are drinking. Do not drink with your pregnant wife, partner, relative, or friend. Provide her with sober support and friendship.
- ❖ **Remember that pregnancy is a sacred time.** Help the pregnant woman in your life engage in healthy, alcohol-free activities during pregnancy.
- ❖ **Listen.** Take time to listen. Talking about her fears and worries may make your wife, partner, relative, or friend feel better and keep her from drinking.
- ❖ **Find out more about your role.** Talk to elders or others you respect within your tribe, family, and/or community about the traditional responsibilities and roles of Native men.
- ❖ **Get help if needed.** Help the pregnant woman in your life look into alcohol-related services, including meetings, clinics, and traditional healing methods. Look into these resources for yourself if you need help too.

Understanding and preventing FASD will help strengthen your family, community, and people. By caring for the health of this generation, you will help to create sons and daughters full of potential who are ready to carry on traditions and move the community forward.

* May, P.A., and Gossage, J.P. 2001. Estimating the prevalence of fetal alcohol syndrome: A summary. *Alcohol Research & Health* 25(3):159-167.

Pregnancy is Sacred

For more information, visit fasdcenter.samhsa.gov or call 866-STOPFAS.
www.stopalcoholabuse.gov