

10 Commonly Asked Questions About Alcohol Use During Pregnancy

This resource provides answers to 10 common questions about alcohol use during pregnancy and offers links for more information and support.

Q: Is it safe to drink alcohol in moderation during pregnancy?

A: It is safest not to use alcohol during pregnancy. Alcohol use during pregnancy can increase the risk of complications, including miscarriage, premature birth, and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). No amount of alcohol has been proven safe to consume during pregnancy.

Q: What is Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)?

A: FASD is a lifelong disability that affects the brains and bodies of individuals exposed to alcohol in the womb.

Q: What signs might indicate my baby is affected by alcohol?

A: Some signs of prenatal alcohol exposure may include: low birth weight, developmental delays, behavioral challenges, and facial abnormalities. It is difficult to see the signs and symptoms in newborns, infants, and young children. Many babies will not show visible signs, so FASD is often not diagnosed until individuals are children or teenagers.

Q: What if I didn't know I was pregnant and drank alcohol?

A: If you drank before knowing you were pregnant, it is best to stop as soon as you find out. Cutting back on alcohol use at any point in pregnancy can improve yours and your baby's health.

Q: What about tobacco, cannabis, opioids, and other substances?

A: Tobacco, cannabis, opioids and other substances can also affect pregnancy outcomes in different ways. If you are concerned about your substance use, it is important to talk to a trusted health care provider to see what options are available to you.

Q: I'm struggling to stop drinking. How can I protect my baby?

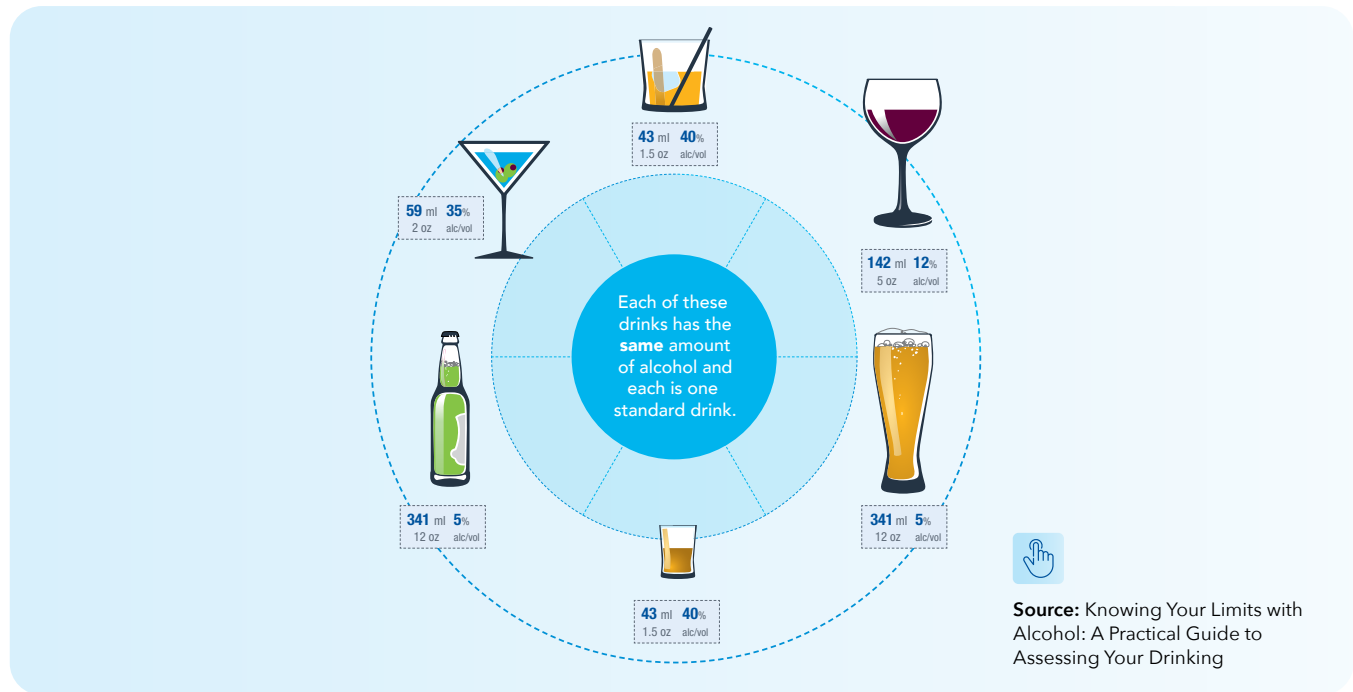
A: If quitting is hard, start drinking less often and having fewer drinks at any one time. A strategy you might consider is alternating alcoholic beverages with water. Prioritize your health in as many ways as possible – eat well, drink lots of water, get rest and sleep. Be kind to yourself. Every step matters.

Q: Are certain stages of pregnancy more harmful for drinking?

A: Alcohol can harm fetal development at any stage, as the brain and organs are developing throughout pregnancy. The safest choice is to not drink.

Q: Are some types of alcohol safer than others?

A: No. All types of alcohol—beer, wine, and spirits—contain ethanol, which can harm your health and fetal development. Standard drink sizes and amounts:



Q: How can I talk to my health care provider about my alcohol use?

A: You have the right to get the help you need without fear of judgment. It can be helpful to reflect on your goals around alcohol use, write down your concerns, or take someone you trust to appointments, to help you communicate your health needs. Booklets, like *"Thinking about Pregnancy"* can be used at any stage of pregnancy to help you identify the benefits and drawbacks to drinking, what small steps you would like to take, and who in your life can help you achieve your goals.

Q: Can drinking alcohol while breastfeeding harm my baby?

A: Alcohol can have negative impacts on both your milk production and baby's development. As alcohol leaves your bloodstream, it also leaves the breast milk. On average, it takes about two hours per drink for alcohol to leave your body and your breast milk. If you plan on drinking, it can be helpful to pump beforehand or wait at least two hours per drink before feeding again.

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND RESOURCES, YOU CAN GO TO:

- » Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada
- » Centre of Excellence for Women's Health
- » Canada Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Research Network

TO LEARN MORE VISIT:

[pregnancyinfo.ca/
substance-use-in-pregnancy](http://pregnancyinfo.ca/substance-use-in-pregnancy)

