



For Immediate Release

The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada Updates Clinical Practice Guideline for Screening and Counselling for Alcohol Consumption During Pregnancy in time for International FASD Day

Ottawa - Sept 9, 2020 - Alcohol is a known teratogen, and this means that exposure in utero can cause developmental complications. There is no known safe amount of alcohol that can be consumed during pregnancy. When a woman drinks alcohol during pregnancy, the baby may be born with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD); which is a lifelong disability that affects the brain and body. Each person with FASD has both strengths and challenges and will need special supports to help them succeed with many different parts of their daily lives. The safest option for women not to drink alcohol when they are pregnant.

The newly released and updated SOGC Clinical Practice Guideline “Screening and Counselling for Alcohol Consumption During Pregnancy” (<https://www.jogc.com/>) reinforces this message and outlines evidence-based screening tools for healthcare providers to assess alcohol use and to provide support to women during pregnancy. The release of the guideline coincides with International FASD Day (September 9th), which aims to bring awareness to and challenge the stigma and misinformation surrounding FASD.

Despite strong evidence that alcohol affects fetal growth and development for over 40 years, in Canada today, approximately 4% of the population has FASD. Given that prenatal healthcare providers have a significant influential role in healthy pregnancies, providing appropriate screening and brief supportive interventions for alcohol use during pregnancy is essential to preventing FASD.

The SOGC guideline reiterates that all pregnant women should be screened for alcohol use during pregnancy in a non-judgmental way. Every clinical encounter is an opportunity to discuss and screen for alcohol use during pregnancy, and this can be done both early in the childbearing years and during prenatal appointments. By asking all women about their alcohol use, healthcare providers can ensure equitable delivery of care and provide education, brief intervention, or harm reduction support, accordingly.

The guideline also discusses brief clinical screening tools that can be used to assess alcohol use during pregnancy and includes evidence-based recommendations (pre-conception, during pregnancy, and post-partum) for: brief intervention, harm reduction strategies in the case of alcohol disorders, referral programs in Canada, pharmacotherapy options, alcohol use during lactation and relapse prevention. Additionally, the SOGC has developed a public website about alcohol during pregnancy that answers common questions women may have, and offers downloadable resources for clinicians to facilitate the discussion and recognition of alcohol use during pregnancy (<https://www.pregnancyinfo.ca/alcohol/>). The SOGC is also partnering with the Canada FASD Research Network to offer online educational programs for health care providers related to alcohol and pregnancy, including The Prevention Conversation (<https://estore.canfasd.ca/prevention-conversation>).



-30-

About the SOGC

The SOGC is one of Canada's oldest national specialty organizations. Established in 1944, the Society's mission is to promote excellence in the practice of obstetrics and gynaecology and to advance the health of women through leadership, advocacy, collaboration and education. The SOGC represents obstetricians/gynaecologists, family physicians, nurses, midwives and allied health professionals working in the field of sexual reproductive health. For more information, visit sogc.org or you can follow us on [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [YouTube](#).

Media Relations:

Jay Poulton
Director of Communications
1-800-561-2416 or 613-730-4192, ext. 228
Email: jpoulton@sogc.com