

STATEMENT

Prevention of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) during the COVID-19 pandemic

The Canada Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Research Network and the Centre of Excellence for Women's Health are committed to supporting Canadians, our stakeholders, and public health efforts by providing reliable information to support sound decision making related to alcohol use in the context of the current COVID19 pandemic.

Today, it has been reported that Canadians have increased their alcohol use during this period of isolation [CCSA report](#). The highest increase of alcohol use is for people aged 18-54. There is a prediction that there will be a baby boom in 2021 due to the isolation that couples of child bearing age are experiencing.

We encourage Canadians to be mindful that alcohol use during pregnancy can cause harm to fetal health and result in lifetime effects known as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). There are many factors in addition to alcohol use, that affect risk for FASD, such as the mother's overall health, nutrition, use of other substances, stress level and connection to prenatal care, as well as genetics. There is no known safe time or level of drinking during pregnancy, thus experts agree that *it is safest not to drink* alcohol in pregnancy and encourage reducing or stopping alcohol consumption by women and their partners in the preconception and perinatal period.

We encourage Canadians to:

- Ensure that they are using a reliable contraceptive if they are not planning to be pregnant.
- Reduce or eliminate alcohol use when planning a pregnancy.
- Be mindful of alcohol use if you are pregnant. The safest approach is to not use alcohol during this time.
- Seek out alternative coping strategies and support for managing the influences or pressures to drink.
- Seek information about risks and available supports from reliable sources.
- Talk to your health provider or other trusted practitioners.

Suggested resources:

- [Canada's Low Risk Drinking Guidelines](#)
- [Understanding Alcohol use and Pregnancy](#)

- [Girls, Women, Alcohol, and Pregnancy](#)
- [CEWH publications on maternal health and substance use](#)

We encourage our Stakeholders to:

- To stay up to date with reliable information. The [Public Health Agency of Canada](#) provides regular updates.
- Follow the [CanFASD Connect Blog](#) for up to date information and helpful resources
- Reshare the information for their own networks.
- Maintain consistent messaging by using the CanFASD Social Media package (TBA)

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