

# 5 Things to Know About: Level 1 FASD Prevention

## Broad Awareness & Health Promotion

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Prevention is more than Awareness Building

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Health Promotion is Foundational

3

Language and Images Matter

4

Reducing Stigma is Key

5

Everyone Plays a Part

## What is Level 1 FASD Prevention?



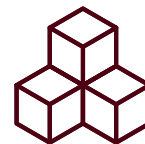
### Awareness

The goal of Level 1 FASD prevention is to increase everyone's awareness about the risks of alcohol use during pregnancy, which can reduce stigma at every turn.



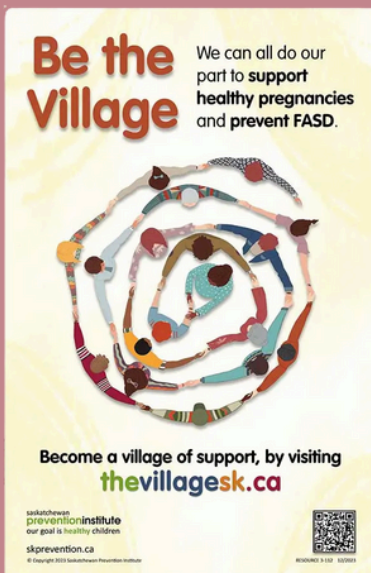
### Health Promotion

Level 1 FASD prevention involves whole communities in health promotion efforts that create supportive environments.



### Foundational

Level 1 FASD prevention is the foundation for all FASD prevention levels; weaving awareness of FASD prevention efforts into all levels.



## Effective Level 1 Approaches to Prevent FASD

- Non-stigmatizing FASD prevention campaigns that use inclusive, non-judgemental, and respectful language
- Community-led health promotion initiatives
- Social media engagement and digital campaigns
- Health promotion in primary care settings

# 5 Things to Know About: Level 1 FASD Prevention

## 1. Prevention is more than Awareness Building

Level 1 FASD prevention is focused on broad awareness, health promotion, and community development. It includes forms of public education, such as pamphlets, posters, information sheets, websites, and social media posts offering health information. It also includes universal approaches, such as broad public awareness campaigns, alcohol warning labels on beverage containers, low risk drinking guidelines, and community-based alcohol strategies, all of which aim to get information about the risks of alcohol to everyone. Despite the importance of Level 1 FASD prevention, awareness of the risks of alcohol use in pregnancy by itself, does not always result in change in attitudes and behaviours. However, it does increase knowledge, so that societal support for reducing alcohol-exposed pregnancies is possible. At this level of prevention, information is not only targeted towards those who are planning a pregnancy, but also families, friends, and communities. Both public education campaigns and health promotion efforts can not only to inform, but also to guide individuals to resources and services that support change and optimize healthy outcomes during the preconception and prenatal periods.

## 2. Health Promotion is Foundational

Health promotion enables people, groups and communities to take positive action to improve their health. Health promotion is about promoting skills by individuals to follow Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health, and having supportive community environments, healthy public policy, and community wide action on alcohol issues that facilitates healthy decision making. It is notable how awareness building and community-based health action go together to support women and their families to make healthy decisions about alcohol use. In FASD Awareness month community health promotion and awareness efforts are most visible through community gatherings, walks, fairs and other collective activities. Year round health promotion efforts such as having alcohol free spaces, parks and events, restricting the availability of alcohol, and sharing of information online by public health officials works as a foundation to FASD prevention.

## 3. Language and Images Matter

The language and imagery used in FASD prevention campaigns are important. It is important that the information provided is clear, consistent, non-stigmatizing, and evidence-based. The choice of language and the images displayed can make the difference between a pregnant person seeking or avoiding services. Wording that implies that women are irresponsible or are deliberately harming their children by using alcohol during pregnancy leads to guilt, shame, fear, and stigma, and can discourage individuals from accessing supportive services – including prenatal care and substance use treatment. Imagery that focuses only on the womb and not the whole women, or that uses exploitative graphics of fetal harm stigmatize both individuals with substance use disorders and those with FASD.

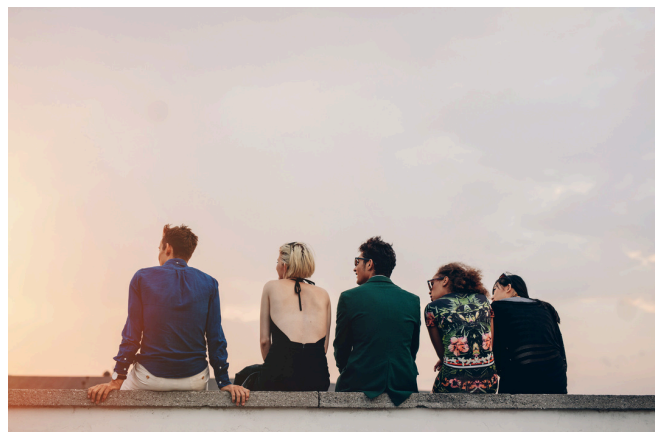
It is important to use respectful, harm reduction-oriented language and images that support dignity, recognize how challenging it can be for some to stop using alcohol during pregnancy, and that highlight that women do not need to do this alone.

## 4. Reducing Stigma is Key

Stigma presents a significant barrier to all new parents who need to access non-judgemental treatment, services, and supports. Stigma can negatively impact those who are trying to reduce their alcohol use, impacting their self-esteem and confidence to either reduce their substance use and/or parent their child. Stigma can also limit women's capacity or ability to seek additional supports that can help reduce alcohol or other substance use. Stigma and discrimination may be experienced in many ways – whether it be through internalized guilt and shame, by healthcare providers and the systems they operate with, or in the media. Stigma can also result in the under-reporting of alcohol use during pregnancy, which can delay access to support. It is important that awareness raising campaigns are evidence based, challenge stereotypes, and work to address discrimination; so that they invite, rather than deter, women from seeking help.

## 5. Everyone Plays a Part

Everyone has a role in promoting healthy pregnancies. Providing evidence-based, non-judgemental, and destigmatizing health education or awareness raising materials can increase opportunities for earlier support. Through increasing who is involved in healthy pregnancies, it normalizes how we are able to talk about alcohol use in pregnancy, and encourages friends, families, and communities to better understand both FASD and the harms of alcohol use in pregnancy.



## Resources and References

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