

Australian Medical Association Limited
ABN 37 008 426 793

42 Macquarie Street, Barton ACT 2600: PO Box 6090, Kingston ACT 2604
 Telephone: (02) 6270 5400 Facsimile (02) 6270 5499
 Website : <http://www.ama.com.au/>



**PUTTING THE SPOTLIGHT ON THE DANGERS OF DRINKING
 DURING PREGNANCY**

International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Day, 9 September 2015

#FASD

#FASDAwarenessDay

The AMA today joins with a range of health groups – including the Australian FASD Network, NOFASD Australia, and the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) – in raising awareness about the health dangers of drinking alcohol during pregnancy.

FASD refers to a range of disabilities (learning, behavioural, and developmental) that result from alcohol exposure during pregnancy.

Alcohol consumed during pregnancy crosses the placenta and can cause complications of pregnancy and damage to the developing fetus, including FASD. The risks are greatest with high, frequent alcohol consumption during the first trimester of pregnancy.

AMA President, Professor Brian Owler, said today that FASD is the most common preventable cause of non-genetic developmental disability in Australia.

“FASD is a devastating condition, yet it is entirely preventable,” Professor Owler said.

“As doctors at the front line of health care, AMA members have vivid personal experiences of the harms caused by alcohol in the community, including FASD.

“The key to reducing alcohol-related harms is a change in the Australian drinking culture, with a new focus on promoting and encouraging more responsible alcohol consumption.

“This will lead to reduced harms to individual drinkers and, importantly, reduced harms to other people, including unborn children.

“Alcohol consumption during pregnancy does not occur in isolation. FASD is one of a number of many harms attributable to alcohol in our community.

“Any attempts to tackle FASD must occur within a coordinated, comprehensive whole-of-government approach to reducing harmful drinking across the population.”

Professor Owler said that it is vitally important that all health professionals, including GPs, are trained and supported to ask women about their alcohol consumption.

“The AMA and other health groups are strong supporters of campaigns to equip health professionals with information and resources to educate patients about alcohol and pregnancy,” Professor Owler said.

“Every time a health professional sees a woman patient, there is potential to prevent a new case of FASD and promote education and awareness of the harms of alcohol during pregnancy.”

The AMA acknowledges the Government funding for the Commonwealth Action Plan to reduce the impact of FASD through until 2017.

Background

- the current Australian guidelines (NHMRC) recommend that adults limit themselves to two standard alcoholic drinks per day;
- for women planning to become pregnant, or who are already pregnant, the safest option is to avoid alcohol altogether;
- many Australian women continue to consume alcohol during their pregnancy. Recent research found that 40 per cent of Australian women drink at least some alcohol during their pregnancy; and
- alcohol consumption during pregnancy may be attributable to a number of factors, including the possibility that some women are unaware that they are pregnant (and therefore are not avoiding alcohol).

For more information on International FASD Day, go to:

- <http://www.nofasd.org.au/>
- <http://www.fare.org.au/>



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CONTACT: John Flannery
Odette Visser

02 6270 5477 / 0419 494 761
02 6270 5412 / 0427 209 753