



**IF YOU
TAKE IT
I TAKE IT**

How lifestyle changes during pregnancy can make a big difference for you and your baby



ALCOHOL
and **you**

What every expectant parent wants is a healthy baby

It is an exciting time. A new baby will be here soon and you want to do the best for them. Your midwife is here to help and support you.

As the title says, however, IF YOU TAKE IT I TAKE IT!

Some research findings show that babies born to women who use alcohol, illegal drugs or tobacco when they are pregnant may have brain structure changes that persist into early adolescence.

This may not be an issue for you or you may have already decided that you want to make changes. Most women do that when they find they are pregnant. That's good.

This advice was developed because some women may be undecided or need support to make those changes.

Having a healthy baby is important to you. What many women experience when they are holding their baby for the first time are feelings of pride, satisfaction and achievement because they made healthy choices for the sake of themselves and their baby. ***We hope this information helps you do that.***



What do you want for your baby?

Alcohol Advice

- Alcohol is dangerous to your baby at any time during your pregnancy and not just in the first 3 months.
- When a pregnant woman drinks, the alcohol in her blood passes freely through the placenta into the developing baby's blood.
- Because the baby does not have a fully developed liver, it cannot filter out the toxins from the alcohol, like an adult can. Instead, the alcohol circulates in the baby's blood system causing damage to the organs and nervous system.



If you are pregnant the safest thing to do is not drink alcohol".

NO ALCOHOL = NO RISK

The Chief Medical Officers' guidelines:

- If you are pregnant or planning a pregnancy, the safest approach is not to drink alcohol at all, to keep risks to your baby to a minimum.
 - Drinking in pregnancy can lead to long-term harm to the baby, with the more you drink the greater the risk.
 - Women who find out that they are pregnant after having consumed alcohol in the early stages of pregnancy, should avoid further drinking, but should be aware that it's unlikely in most cases that their baby has been affected.
- Drinking alcohol in pregnancy increases your risk of stillbirth, growth restriction and premature labour. Also if you drink alcohol during pregnancy your baby could suffer from Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. (FASD)

What is FASD?

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is an umbrella term for lifelong alcohol related disorders and birth defects caused by alcohol exposure to the baby in the womb. The mother does not have to be drinking heavily for this to occur.

Symptoms of FASD may include: Learning difficulties, problems with emotional development and behaviour, memory and attention disorders, hyperactivity, facial deformities, being small, at birth and throughout life.

There is no cure for FASD however it is 100% preventable.



Smoking

Smoking during pregnancy increases the risk of complications for the mother and baby.

These include

- **Miscarriage**
- **Premature birth**
- **Low birth-weight**
- **Increased risk of cot death**
- **Increased risk of stillbirth**



While some women may welcome the prospect of delivering a smaller baby, stunting a baby's growth in the womb through smoking can have negative consequences that last a lifetime.

Why be concerned about smoking?

- **Cigarette smoke contains more than 4,000 chemicals, including things like cyanide and lead.**
- **Carbon monoxide is produced from your cigarette. This toxic mix gets into your bloodstream destroying healthy red blood cells; this is your baby's only source of oxygen and nutrients.**
- **Nicotine in Cigarettes chokes off oxygen for your baby by narrowing blood vessels throughout your body, including the ones in the umbilical cord.**

A few cigarettes a day are safer than a whole pack, but the difference isn't as great as you might think. A smoker's body is especially sensitive to the first doses of nicotine from cigarettes each day, and even just one or two cigarettes will significantly tighten blood vessels.

That's why even a "light" habit can still have an effect on your baby.



Drugs including over the counter medication

As previously stated when you take it, your baby takes it. All drugs will pass through the placenta to your baby. For advice regarding prescription drugs - see your GP.



Taking illegal drugs in pregnancy increases the chance of birth defects, premature birth, low birth weight and still birth.

Your baby can become physically addicted in the womb and therefore after the birth may suffer from neonatal withdrawal symptoms. If you have any question or concerns talk to your midwife or GP.

Excessive stress

Evidence indicates extreme stress and anxiety in pregnancy can have harmful effects that can continue throughout the infant's lifespan. That's because stress releases a harmful hormone called cortisol which can cross the placenta and affect the normal development of your child's wellbeing.

What are these long term stresses?

- **Someone in the family with an alcohol or drug problems**
- **A long term health condition or mental health problem**
- **Domestic violence**
- **Work place stress**

A dangerous thing about chronic stress is that people get used to it and they just accept it and say they are coping.



You may not be able to change your situation but the right support can make a big difference for you and your baby



By making some basic changes what are the benefits for you and your baby?

FOR YOU	YOUR BABY
<p>Overall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The knowledge that you are doing your best to give your baby the best start. <p>Physical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Reduced risk of premature birthReduced risk of miscarriageBetter sleep pattern <p>Psychological/Social/Financial</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Improved moodImproved sense of well beingSave money	<p>Physical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Reduced risk of premature birthReduced risk of miscarriageNO risk of FASD (Remember NO alcohol-NO Risk)Improved growth and developmentReduced risk of damage to developing organs <p>Psychological</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Reduced risk of learning and behavioural disorders

Using what is in this leaflet

Does alcohol, smoking, drug use or excessive stress affect you?

YES

NO



What is your goal while you are pregnant?



Importance of making a change

On a scale of 0 (not important) to 10 (very important) how would you rate the importance of making a change now?

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10



Why have you given this rating?



What would help you get it to where you would give it greater importance?



Confidence about making a change regarding alcohol

On a scale of 0 (not important) to 10 (very important) how would you rate the importance of making this change?



Why have you given this rating?



What would help you feel more confident about making a change about drinking?

Think about changes you have made in the past.

What can you do with this?

- Think through the reasons you want to make a change.
- Make a firm committed decision to change.
- Make a plan: how are you going to do it

Making a plan Having a plan can be helpful to make any change.

Identify good reasons for changing: can you think of two or three good reasons for making a change?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



Set yourself a goal to achieve change: This will need to be something you can believe you can do.

What:

When:



Recognise difficult situations: when might you find it hardest to change

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



Prepare for difficult situations: think of ways to cope when you find it hard to change Find someone to support you to make these changes.

Who can help me?



Get Support

How do you feel when you do make a change?

Who is there for support?



Smoking

The Health Improvement Midwife can offer intensive support and suggestions on nicotine replacement to use. **Contact Cathy on: 07715044886**
For support if you live outside the South Eastern Trust area see **www.want2stop.info/stop-smoking-services**

Alcohol

Alcohol and You provides a range of services:

Self-help via our website, an opportunity to have a one to one conversation to help you decide what you want to do about drinking or counselling to help you reach your goal. **We can be contacted at 08002545123** or through our website at **www.alcoholandyouni.com**

Are you affected by someone else's drinking?

Family intervention service is part of Alcohol and You. It is for family members affected by another person's drinking. The person misusing alcohol does not need to be seeking help with their drinking for you to make use of this service. **Tel: 08002545123**

For other support available and for support outside the South Eastern Trust area see **www.drugsandalcoholni.info** for a directory of services.

Other useful contacts

Mental Health Concerns **www.nidirect.gov.uk/mental-health**

24 hour Domestic Violence Helpline **0808 8021 414**

(This number will not appear on your phone bill or be disclosed via 1471)

24hrsupport@dvhelpline.org

Family support **www.familysupportni.gov.uk**

Alcohol and You is The South Eastern Trust, ASCERT, and Addiction NI working together to reduce alcohol related harm Alcohol and You is funded by the Big lottery's impact of Alcohol program



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