

MEDIA RELEASE

Alcohol Healthwatch

9 September 2021



Global message to prevent harm from drinking during pregnancy

Today marks World FASD Awareness Day; a day to take a pause and reflect on how we are supporting alcohol-free pregnancies as well as those affected by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) in Aotearoa New Zealand.

“Everyone participating in FASD Awareness Day globally, is invited to share in a ‘Moment of Reflection’ at 9:09am - *the ninth minute, of the ninth hour, of the ninth day, of the ninth month* - to symbolise the nine months of pregnancy in which to grow a healthy baby - and to reflect on those who are already living with FASD and need our help,” Ms Rogan, FASD Coordinator at Alcohol Healthwatch, says.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, it is estimated that half of all pregnancies are exposed to alcohol. There is no safe time nor amount of alcohol exposure that is considered safe for the developing fetus.

FASD is the diagnostic term used to describe the impacts on the brain and body of individuals prenatally exposed to alcohol during pregnancy. It is estimated that at least 1,800 babies are born with FASD in Aotearoa New Zealand each year.¹

FASD is a lifelong, preventable disability. Each individual with FASD is unique and has areas of both strengths and challenges. They are likely to experience challenges in their daily living, needing support with learning, emotional regulation, physical and mental health and social skills. Associated difficulties extend to the families and caregivers, who commonly express daily challenges and distress raising their loved ones with FASD, often with little to no support.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions this year, physical events have been put on hold. However, FASD Awareness Day and the moment of reflection will be marked during online events with guest speakers. Read more about the events here <https://www.actionpoint.org.nz/fasd>.

Continuing to raise awareness, Alcohol Healthwatch launches a new factsheet entitled ‘Prenatal alcohol exposure and lifelong impact of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder’ available at <https://www.actionpoint.org.nz/fasd>.

“We know that prevention of FASD needs a multi-faceted approach, that not only increases understanding and awareness, but implements environmental and policy changes to address the wider role that affordability, availability and promotion of alcohol play in alcohol-related harm, such as FASD. We all have so much to gain by supporting alcohol-free pregnancies and protecting future generations” says Ms Rogan.

ENDS

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¹ Joint Food Regulation System. Decision Regulation Impact Statement: Pregnancy warning labels on packaged alcoholic beverages. 2018.