

Girls, Alcohol and Pregnancy

Information for Service Providers



Alcohol use during pregnancy is strongly related to alcohol use before pregnancy. Prevention efforts support women's health across the lifespan, starting with girls and young women. Service providers can offer girls with the opportunity for safe discussion about reproductive health concerns, contraception, pregnancy, alcohol use, and related issues such as sexuality, mental wellness, and body image.

Brief Interventions with Girls

15 OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISCUSSION, SKILL-BUILDING AND SUPPORT

- 1 Talk about low-risk alcohol use in the context of Canada's Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines.
- 2 Start conversations based on girls' needs and interests. Alcohol use and misuse is often associated with other issues such as body weight, depression, anxiety, and tobacco use.
- 3 Provide information about youth-friendly services in the community.
- 4 Role-model how to have conversations about alcohol use with parents, siblings and other family members.
- 5 Some girls may not be interested in changing their alcohol use. Discuss strategies for effective contraception and ensuring personal safety and safety of friends while drinking.
- 6 Discuss how individual responses to alcohol can vary significantly depending on body size, genetics, hunger, other drugs, and medication use. Help girls find their limit.
- 7 Provide information about how women's bodies metabolize alcohol differently from men's.
- 8 Discuss how alcohol use can have consequences of particular concern for women, such as increased rates of breast cancer.
- 9 Help girls see the bigger picture and discuss what constitutes "risky" or "heavy" drinking.
- 10 Ensure sexually active girls know how, when, and where to access regular contraception, and, if needed, emergency contraception.
- 11 Discuss how contraceptive methods, including barrier methods and oral contraception, may be less effective if girls have been drinking heavily and vomiting. Provide information about alternate forms of contraception, long acting reversible contraceptives and emergency contraception.
- 12 Some girls might be interested in discussing alcohol marketing. Help girls critique the messages they are often presented with in mass media and advertising.
- 13 Some girls may use alcohol to cope with stress and/or difficult life circumstances. Respect that they are doing the best they can, listen to their concerns, and support the development of additional ways of coping.
- 14 Know how to identify possible signs of alcohol dependence and discuss these warning signs with girls who have questions about their own use and possible misuse.
- 15 Discuss alcohol use in the context of smoking, marijuana use, and other substance use. Alcohol use doesn't always happen in isolation. Girls may request information and support related to other substance use first.

FASD prevention begins long before pregnancy. Support girls' autonomy by giving them the knowledge, resources and support to make healthy choices around alcohol and contraception.