

The Manager  
Food Standards Australia New Zealand

**SUBMISSION A576**

Alcohol use in pregnancy especially in the first three months is the leading cause of birth defects and mental developmental disabilities in the Western World. It is estimated it affects 1 in 100 infants. It can lead to problems with learning, behaviour, inattention, sleeping, memory and understanding "cause and effect" consequences of any actions.

The long term effect of prenatal exposure on any society is enormous. The economic social and emotional impact, let alone the individual anguish is substantial.

Alcohol affects the developing brain neurons and as children grow, poor memory becomes obvious, depression, anger and violence will be displayed.

An estimated 50% of individuals with FASD will end up in institutional care, a mental health facility or prison.

Unknowingly many couples celebrate their pregnancy with a few drinks and later suffer the anguish and heartbreak of a child with Foetal Alcohol Syndrome.

"Alcohol taken by the pregnant woman goes through the placenta. It immediately causes damage to the neurons in the brain of the developing baby. Studies show thousands of healthy cells, all communicating and melding together until alcohol hits them. Then they randomly fly about and do not connect as they should".

"Alcohol stays in the amniotic fluid for a long time. In addition the umbilical cord is constricted and flow of blood pumped to the baby is decreased".

"40% of women admit to drinking alcohol when pregnant and women are drinking at high levels at an increasing rate. 50% of people are not aware of any risks when drinking alcohol during pregnancy".

A WARNING LABEL on all alcohol containers and displayed in places which sell or serve alcohol will inform everyone of the danger in drinking alcohol when pregnant.

The warning should read :-

**"DRINKING ALCOHOL WHEN PREGNANT CAN CAUSE BIRTH DEFECTS"**

This simple, ongoing, educational statement would be seen by everyone handling alcohol, Australians should be given this knowledge.

Yvonne G.Tilley  
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References: Dr, Whitehall, Director of Neonatology,  
Townsville Hospital, Queensland.

Dr. Larry Burd, Professor of the Department of Paediatrics & Director of the North  
Dakota FAS Centre,  
University of America.

Professor Elizabeth Elliot,  
Paediatrics & Child Health Consultant Paediatrician,  
Westmead Hospital  
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