

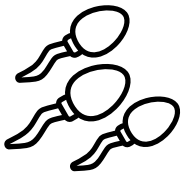
# Alcohol Before, During, and After Pregnancy

Booze, beer, coolers, wine, liquor, and spirits

## FAST FACTS

- Using alcohol during pregnancy raises the risk of complications like having your baby too early and lifelong growth and development problems
- All drinks with alcohol (beer, coolers, wine, or liquor) contain ethanol
  - The health risks come from ethanol itself, so the risk is the same no matter what you drink
- Alcohol goes into your body, and your breastmilk, very easily
  - The more you drink, the longer it stays in your body and your milk
- It is never too late to stop drinking. Stopping drinking will improve the health of your baby and yourself.

**There is no known safe amount of alcohol to use in pregnancy or when breastfeeding.**



### Fertility

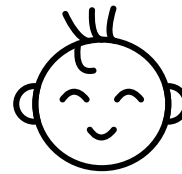
Drinking alcohol can make it harder to get pregnant. Alcohol can affect:

- sexual function
- ovulation
- hormones
- sperm quality
- sperm count



### Pregnancy

Alcohol use during pregnancy can lead to high blood pressure and can increase the risk of complications like miscarriage, stillbirth, and pre-term birth



### Baby

Alcohol can pass from your body to your baby when you are pregnant and cause harm. It can cause:

- low birth weight
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

FASD affects a baby's brain and body and leads to lifelong physical, mental, and behavioural disabilities



### Breastfeeding

Alcohol can pass easily to your baby through breastmilk.

Some people think drinking beer while breastfeeding increases milk supply, but alcohol can actually make it harder for milk to "let down" and reduce how much milk your baby gets.

Drinking more than an occasional **standard drink per week** can affect your baby's sleep, growth, and development.

#### A standard drink is:

Beer: 341 ml (12 oz), 5% alcohol

Cooler/cider: 341 ml (12 oz), 5% alcohol

Wine: 142 ml (5 oz), 12% alcohol

Spirits (vodka, gin, whiskey, etc.): 43 ml (1.5 oz), 40% alcohol



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## Will it help if I “pump and dump” my breastmilk after drinking alcohol?



**No.** Pumping and dumping won't make the alcohol leave your breastmilk any faster.

After one drink, alcohol peaks in your body in about 30-60 minutes and usually takes about two hours to clear per drink. As it leaves your blood, it also leaves your breastmilk.

If you drink occasionally, breastfeed right before you drink and wait about two hours per standard drink before breastfeeding again.

If possible, plan ahead: pump and store your milk before drinking or use formula if you need to feed while alcohol is still in your system.

## I'm struggling to stop drinking. How can I protect my baby?

If planning a pregnancy, or already pregnant, it is safest to stop drinking.

If stopping drinking is hard, try cutting back on how much and how often you drink and use no-alcohol drinks instead to help reduce your alcohol use.

Talk to your healthcare provider about support and services that can help you cut back or quit.



## How can I safely plan breastfeeding if I want to have a drink?



Very young babies can't break down alcohol well. If you're breastfeeding, it's safest to avoid alcohol until your baby is at least eight weeks old.

To lower the risk of harm to your baby, plan feedings and wait 2 hours after each standard drink before breastfeeding again.

Having food while you drink can help lower how much alcohol gets in your blood and breastmilk.

Number of standard drinks	Estimated time for alcohol to clear from breastmilk
1	~2 hours
2	~4 hours
3	~6 hours

### Alcohol and Parenting



If you plan to drink several drinks, make sure another responsible caregiver is with your child so they are supervised safely.



Alcohol can reduce your awareness of your child's needs and slow your reflexes. To prevent harm or injury, don't share your bed with your baby after drinking alcohol or using other drugs.



To help prevent accidental poisoning, keep alcohol out of reach of children.

### References

[Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction. \(2023\). Canada's guidance on alcohol and health.](#)



[Centre of Excellence for Women's Health. \(2022\). Thinking about pregnancy? A booklet to reflect on alcohol use before you are pregnant.](#)

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[Nathoo, T., Stinson, J., Poole, N., & Wolfson, L. \(2021\). Taking Care: A Short Guide to Breastfeeding and Substance Use. Vancouver, BC: Centre of Excellence for Women's Health.](#)

[The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada. \(2025\). Substance use in pregnancy.](#)

