

# Dangers of drinking while pregnant emphasized by experts

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University of Sydney researchers are urging pregnant women to think twice before consuming alcohol, with a new study revealing that while almost 93 percent of Australian women agree alcohol can affect the unborn child, 16 percent do not know the effects are permanent.

A worldwide body of evidence shows that [women](#) who drink heavily while pregnant risk giving birth to children with a number of abnormalities ranging from birth defects, to problems with growth development and learning difficulties. This range of disorders is known as Fetal [Alcohol Spectrum Disorders](#) (FASD).

The new study was lead by Dr. Elizabeth Peadon, a developmental paediatrician and PhD student at the Children's Hospital at Westmead. Study co-author, Professor Elizabeth Elliott from the Discipline of Paediatrics and Child Health, said: "What our study suggests is that a woman's intention to drink during [pregnancy](#) is dependent more on her attitude to [alcohol](#), rather than her knowledge of the harm it may cause her baby.

"This poses a real problem for health professionals because it's much easier to provide information than it is to change attitudes."

*The Women's knowledge and attitudes regarding alcohol consumption in pregnancy: a national survey* into FASD also revealed that over 95 percent of respondents wanted and expected health professionals to talk to them about alcohol use and provide advice in this area.

The survey, published in *BMC Public Health*, further revealed that 'attitudes' not 'knowledge' of the adverse effects of alcohol predict a woman's likelihood to consume alcohol during pregnancy. Women who had given birth previously or who smoked were more likely to have a tolerant attitude towards alcohol consumption during pregnancy and intention to drink during a future pregnancy. Education levels were not associated with attitudes to [alcohol consumption](#) during pregnancy.

Provided by University of Sydney

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