



Region of Waterloo

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NEWS RELEASE

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Pregnant? Planning? Make it a Mocktail

Health and social service providers across the region encourage all women planning a pregnancy or who are pregnant to make their drink of choice a Mocktail. Men and women who are supporting these women are encouraged to praise their efforts and make it as easy as possible for them to remain alcohol-free throughout pregnancy.

Why is Alcohol a Problem in Pregnancy?

Drinking alcohol in pregnancy can cause permanent brain damage and birth defects. In fact, prenatal exposure to alcohol is the leading known cause of preventable brain damage in Canada. The Institute of Medicine states that, "Of all the substances that can be abused in pregnancy, including heroin, cocaine and marijuana, alcohol produces by far the most serious neurobehavioural effects in the fetus." Health Canada's message to Canadians is, "If you are pregnant or wish to become pregnant: don't drink any alcohol "

September 9th is FASDay. This day was chosen so that on the ninth day of the ninth month of the year, the world will remember that during the nine months of pregnancy a woman should abstain from alcohol use. Groups across Canada and around the world will remind everyone that there is **no safe time and no safe amount** of alcohol to consume in pregnancy.

Incidence and Cost of FASD in Canada

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is the umbrella term used to describe the full range of permanent birth defects caused by prenatal exposure to alcohol. Alcohol crosses the placenta and interferes with normal cell development in the brain, nervous system and other organs. People affected with FASD can have learning disabilities, hyperactivity, attention and memory deficits, trouble at school and work, trouble controlling their emotions, and difficulty learning from past mistakes and solving problems.

The Public Health Agency of Canada estimates the incidence of FASD in Canada is 1-2%. However, experts working in the field feel the number is much higher as most people affected by FASD are never diagnosed, due to a lack of diagnostic services and a lack of awareness in

health and social service providers. In Waterloo Region, due to a lack of funding, the Waterloo Region FASD Diagnostic Team is only able to see 10 children and youth per year.

It is difficult to estimate how much FASD costs our country but a recent study done by the Public Health Agency of Canada estimates an annual bill of 5.3 billion dollars to care for all Canadian citizens affected by FASD from birth to 53 years of age. As FASD is preventable it is important that our community support pregnant women in their efforts to remain alcohol-free in pregnancy.

Caring Community Commitment

We ask all citizens to make a commitment to all potential mothers to help them abstain from alcohol use in pregnancy:

LEARN IT – Be informed about the risks of drinking alcohol in pregnancy. Find gentle and caring ways to share the information about the risks of alcohol use in pregnancy with women and others in our community. Ask women how you can help them to remain alcohol free in pregnancy.

LIVE IT – Become an expert at offering and finding tasty mocktails where alcohol is being served. Ask all licensed establishments to follow “Sandy’s Law”, which requires them to display warning signs in a visible location about alcohol and pregnancy.

LEAVE IT – Because it is easier not to drink when you are not alone, toast her mocktail with one of your own. Find ways to have fun that does not involve alcohol.

To raise awareness about how our community can support women planning pregnancies and women who are pregnant the Region of Waterloo FASD Prevention Group offers an interview with pregnant couples to provide ideas about how you can support them to remain alcohol free. Also, we have a local FASD expert with international acclaim, neuropsychologist Dr. Louise Scott, who is willing to be interviewed about FASD and the lifelong neurological consequences of alcohol exposure during pregnancy.

This Press Package has been prepared in partnership with Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, Janet Carioni, Occupational Therapist, KidsAbility, KidsLINK, KWC FASD Advocacy Consulting, Lutherwood, Sharon Porty, Social Worker and the Region of Waterloo Public Health.

For more information on FASD, visit the websites: www.alcoholfreepregnancy.ca

<http://chd.region.waterloo.on.ca/en/childfamilyhealth/alcoholinpregnancy.asp>

www.fascets.org