



Media information

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Devon women urged to stay off alcohol during pregnancy

NHS Devon has warned pregnant women of the dangers of alcohol as part of alcohol awareness week.

They say drinking alcohol can affect a baby's development.

Kristian Tomblin manager for the Devon Drug and Alcohol Action Team (DAAT), which is funded by NHS Devon, said:

“When pregnant women drink, alcohol reaches their baby through their placenta, which connects the mum and baby's blood supply, and this exposure to alcohol can affect the baby's development.

“Pregnant women should try to avoid alcohol to protect their baby but if they do choose to drink then it should not be more than 1-2 units twice a week.

“Alcohol is not just dangerous for the baby in the first three months. Heavy drinking at any time during pregnancy can lead to the child having restricted growth, facial abnormalities and learning and behavioural disorders.

“Expectant mums who find it difficult to go it alone or are experiencing withdrawal symptoms can get support by talking to their midwife, visiting their GP or checking out www.nhs.uk/units”

Health bosses say the risk of miscarriage during the first three months of pregnancy is much higher for women who drink alcohol. Women planning pregnancies can find it more difficult to become pregnant if they drink and alcohol can make men less fertile.

With this in mind they are urging people to cut their alcohol intake by following ten top tips:

- 1) Reduce your units by choosing drinks that are not so strong.
- 2) Don't let people 'top you up'.
- 3) Drink water before you go out.
- 4) Drink slowly and avoid rounds.

- 5) Have more water or soft drinks than alcoholic ones.
- 6) Suggest that you meet friends or colleagues at a café rather than a bar.
- 7) Replace drinking with other stress-reducing pleasures – have a relaxing bath, do some exercise, read or listen to music.
- 8) Invite friends round to your home instead of going out.
- 9) Switch to non-alcoholic versions of your favourite drinks – a Virgin Mary or a fruit juice cocktail.
- 10) If your partner enjoys a drink after work, consider asking him/her not to, so you don't feel deprived.

Alcohol awareness week takes place between 19-25 October.

Ends

For more information or interviews contact Paul Hopkins on 01392 267 647 or 0797 133 0491