

For a full confidential counselling service or further advice telephone the HIV / Hepatitis Counselling Service on:

**For Cheltenham ring**      **01242 274285**

**For Gloucester ring**      **01452 311777**

## **Will my baby be referred to Social Services?**

Social Services will only be involved in your care if you need some extra help, or if there are other concerns about the safety of your baby.

Social Services will not automatically be called just because you have had a problem with alcohol abuse.

If you require any further information please contact any of the telephone numbers in this leaflet and staff will be happy to help.

## **Local groups & telephone numbers:**

AA	01452 418515
Drink Line	0800 9178282
NHS Direct	0845 4647

## **Gloucestershire Drug & Alcohol Service (GDAS)**

Cheltenham	01242 584881
Forest of Dean	01594 825656
Gloucester	01452 385757
Stroud	01453 755711

## **Alcohol units in drink**

The % of alcohol gives the amount of alcohol per litre. For example a 75cl bottle of 12% wine will contain 0.75 x 12 (i.e 9 units of alcohol).

1 unit of alcohol = a standard pub measure glass of wine, ½ normal strength beer, 1 shot of spirits.

**Patient Information for the  
Gloucestershire Health Community**

# **Alcohol & Pregnancy**

## **Is alcohol dangerous in pregnancy?**

Ideally women should not drink alcohol at all whilst pregnant. Light alcohol intake e.g. less than 8 units per week is unlikely to lead to problems for mother and baby. However, drinking more than this may affect the babies growth and development.

## **Foetal alcohol syndrome**

This condition has been found in children whose mothers drank very heavily in pregnancy. Children with foetal alcohol syndrome have learning and behavioural problems, are much smaller than average and have some characteristic changes in their face such that they are often described as "pixie like".

## **How does alcohol affect mothers?**

Excessive use of alcohol is associated with hypertension, liver disease, pancreatic inflammation and nerve damage. Women who are drinking heavily may not be attending to their diet and may have problems with lack of Vitamins, rest, sleep and relaxation.

## **Alcohol dependence**

Dependence (or addiction) to alcohol can occur in heavy users of alcohol. Signs of alcohol dependence include experiencing

withdrawal symptoms when alcohol is stopped or the amount taken is reduced. Withdrawal symptoms include shaking, sweating, retching, vomiting and loss of control over drinking. If you are dependent on alcohol and suddenly stop you may be at risk of fitting or delirium tremens (the DTs)

## **What should I do if I am using too much alcohol?**

It is important to reduce down to safe limits, but if you are not able to stop or reduce alcohol without experiencing physical symptoms of withdrawal or if you experience psychological difficulties such as craving for drink or an inability to cope, you should discuss this with one of the professionals involved in looking after you and your baby.

## **How can I get help/treatment if I need to?**

It is important to talk to someone about your difficulties, for example your General Practitioner (GP), midwife, or obstetrician can talk to you about your alcohol consumption and give you advice on cutting down or stopping drinking and this can be a very effective intervention. If you feel that you need more help they can refer you to the Countywide Specialist Substance Misuse Service who can offer more in-depth counselling and arrange detoxification if necessary.

If you do not feel able to talk to any of the Health Professionals regarding your alcohol use then you can refer yourself to (Gloucestershire Drugs & Alcohol Service (GDAS) for further advice and counselling.

## **Should I be tested for HIV/ Hepatitis?**

HIV and Hepatitis testing is offered to all women. These infections can be transmitted via sexual intercourse. There is also a chance that babies may be infected from their mothers. If you think you may have put yourself at risk of HIV or Hepatitis, it is worth considering being tested during pregnancy, as there are several benefits for you and your baby.

If you are Hepatitis B positive the baby can be immunised at birth which will greatly reduce their chance of infection with Hepatitis B. If you are HIV positive the obstetricians and midwives will be able to make some changes to the labour and delivery to make transmission to the baby less likely.

If you are positive for Hepatitis C your baby can be followed up closely by the paediatrician and treated as necessary. You may be referred to the Liver Specialist for treatment.

Obviously there are less positive reasons and consequences of being tested which need to be discussed fully with trained counsellors. Remember no one can force you into taking a test.