

Dr Jana Pittman joins campaign to support alcohol-free pregnancies and safe breastfeeding practices

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Former Olympian turned women's health doctor, **Dr Jana Pittman**, is helping to get Australians talking about alcohol-free pregnancies, and safe breastfeeding practices.

Announced today as an ambassador for the **Every Moment Matters** campaign, **Dr Pittman** is encouraging Australians to learn more about how every moment matters in a pregnancy when it comes to alcohol use.

Developed by the Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) and endorsed and funded by the Australian Government, **Every Moment Matters** is Australia's first, nation-wide public awareness campaign to raise awareness of the risk of alcohol use during pregnancy.

"In my experience with friends, family and even patients, I can see there is so much misinformation about alcohol and what is and isn't safe during pregnancy and also while breastfeeding," she said.

"The message we need to share very clearly is that at every stage of pregnancy, and when breastfeeding, any alcohol you drink passes directly to your developing baby.

"That's why the National Health and Medical Research Council's *Australian Guidelines to reduce health risks from drinking* (the Guidelines) say that women who are pregnant should not drink alcohol – and for women who are breastfeeding, not drinking alcohol is safest for their baby.

"As a mum of six and a doctor, I've been through this process enough times to know the score, however for many first-time parents it's an entirely new concept. It's something I really don't believe is discussed enough, particularly at the very early stages of family planning.

"I'm hoping we can start more conversations about supporting alcohol-free pregnancies, and promote evidence-based strategies to ensure breastmilk that is fed to babies is alcohol-free too.

"This includes helping health professionals to have these important conversations with mums-to-be, and providing advice that's based on the latest research."

Drinking alcohol during any stage of pregnancy can lead to Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), which causes a range of physical, behavioural and cognitive problems. FASD is the leading preventable developmental disability in Australia and can cause challenges with speech and language development, learning, behaviour, motor skills, sensory processing and social interactions.

"The support of partners, friends and family is critical for people who are pregnant or trying to get pregnant," said Dr Pittman. "Not drinking alcohol is infinitely more manageable when others aren't drinking, so one of the best ways to support someone you care about is to join them in stopping."

"You can also plan social events without alcohol, provide or bring alcohol-free drinks to gatherings, or simply show support for someone if they're being pressured to drink alcohol in social situations."

FARE CEO, Caterina Giorgi said, “We’re excited to welcome Dr Pittman as an *Every Moment Matters* ambassador.

“There are so many mixed messages about alcohol, pregnancy and breastfeeding and it is great to be able to share consistent messages that cut through the misinformation and support families to have alcohol-free pregnancies.”

To find out more about the campaign, visit everymomentmatters.org.au

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Research undertaken by FARE before the launch of the *Every Moment Matters* campaign in 2021 found a need for increasing awareness among Australians.

- More than **1 in 4** Australian women (**29%**) who were pregnant, planning a pregnancy, or would consider having a baby were unaware that drinking alcohol during pregnancy could cause Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).
- A study of nearly 1,500 Australian women aged 18-44 years found that almost half (**51%**) of those surveyed were not aware that alcohol use could cause harm even in the first few weeks after conception.
- More than two thirds (**69%**) didn’t know that alcohol freely crosses the placenta to the developing baby.
- A further **1 in 7** women reported drinking alcohol after their pregnancy was confirmed.

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