

# BREASTFEEDING AND ALCOHOL



## ALCOHOL IN OUR SOCIETY

- Considered normal and social
- A leading cause of preventable death and injury in Aotearoa.
- Key driver of social and health inequities - especially for Māori, young people and lower socio-economic communities who are often targeted by advertising.
- Can compromise care of babies and children.



## IMPACT ON PĒPI

- Drinking large amounts of alcohol whilst breastfeeding may harm pēpi.
- There is some evidence that drinking 1-2 standard drinks daily while breastfeeding may result in delayed development, disturbed sleep and slow weight gain for pēpi.
- Alcohol affects a caregiver's ability to keep pēpi safe.



## ALCOHOL IN BREAST MILK

- Alcohol passes from the bloodstream into the breastmilk quickly.
- The level of alcohol in the breastmilk is similar to that in the blood.
- Levels peak around 30 - 40 min after a feed and drop back to normal within an hour per standard drink for most.
- Newborns have immature livers and take twice as long to break down alcohol as adults.

## MANAGING THE OCCASIONAL DRINK



- It is best to avoid breastfeeding for 2-3 hours after drinking for each standard drink - this allows the alcohol to clear from the milk.
- Pēpi can be breastfed immediately after having a drink as it takes some time to get into the blood.
- One standard drink is approximately 100ml (small glass) of wine, 330ml (stubby) of beer or a single measure of spirits.
- Keep in mind that alcohol varies in strength and that smaller people and those who haven't eaten recently will be more affected.

## PLANNING AHEAD FOR A SOCIAL OCCASION



- Planning ahead for an occasion where it is likely a breastfeeding parent will have more than a standard drink allows time to express.
- Expressed milk can be fed to pēpi by a sober caregiver whilst the breastfeeding parent is drinking.
- Breasts may become uncomfortable, so if you need to pump in this time, you can discard the milk - this doesn't speed the elimination of alcohol from the body.
- It is vital that parents impacted by alcohol don't sleep with pēpi as this increases the risk of death.
- The Feed Safe NZ App may be helpful.

**ALCOHOL IS BEST MINIMISED FOR ALL OF US.**

**DURING BREASTFEEDING, A DRINK OR TWO MAY BE SAFE**

**IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT YOUR DRINKING OR THAT OF A CLOSE FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER,  
PLEASE TALK WITH THEM OR WITH YOUR HEALTH PRACTITIONER**