



# SEEDS Program

Strategies for Enhancing Early Developmental Success

## Quick Tips for Assessing Maternal Alcohol Consumption

- 🔗 Use a non-blaming, non-judgmental approach.
- 🔗 Assess prenatal alcohol use:
  - in the context of asking about health habits during pregnancy (including nutrition, exercise, stress)
  - while taking a broader psychosocial history, including psychological distress and trauma history in the mother
  - as part of general developmental interview about the child

For example, *"Now I'm going to ask you some questions about your health habits when you were pregnant..."*
- 🔗 When asking about use of alcohol (or any substances) during pregnancy, frame the question by first asking **"How often...?"** and then **"How much...?"** rather than "Did you...?"
  - Asking "How often?" and "How much?" gives a woman permission to acknowledge that she did drink during pregnancy.
- 🔗 Assess the woman separately about her drinking **prior to pregnancy recognition** and **after pregnancy recognition**.
  - Women are often more likely to acknowledge alcohol use prior to pregnancy recognition than after pregnancy recognition.

Frame the prior to pregnancy questions by saying, *"Many women drink alcohol before they realize they are pregnant"* (which is true).
- 🔗 Inquire about more benign substances first (e.g., tea, coffee), then ask about alcohol, and finally other drug use.
- 🔗 Ask separately about **different types** of alcohol.
  - Consumption of beer, wine, and hard alcohol should be assessed separately.
- 🔗 Assess **typical** and **maximum** patterns of drinking.
  - To assess for typical drinking levels, you might ask:  

For example, *"Before you knew you were pregnant, how many (glasses of wine/bottles of beer/shots of tequila) would you typically drink at one sitting?"*
  - To assess for maximum drinking levels, you might ask:  

For example, *"Women sometimes drink more than their usual amount on some occasions (a party, a wedding, on vacation). Before you knew you were pregnant, what was the most number of drinks you drank on any one occasion?"*

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For more information about The SEEDS Program and our services for children and families, please contact us.

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