



## On International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Awareness Day – Remember “049”



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*049 = Zero alcohol for all nine months of pregnancy*

BURLINGTON – September 9 is International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Awareness Day, and Vermont health officials want women to know that “zero” is the only answer to the question: “How much alcohol is safe to drink if you are pregnant or trying to get pregnant?”

Drinking alcohol while pregnant – even in the early weeks before a woman may know she is pregnant – is the leading preventable cause of birth defects and developmental disabilities. Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (also known as FASD) describes the range of physical, mental, behavioral and cognitive disabilities that can occur in babies whose mother drank during pregnancy. The ninth day of the ninth month was selected as FASD Awareness Day as a reminder that a child will not have an FASD if the mother does not drink alcohol for the nine months of pregnancy.

Having even a small amount of alcohol can disrupt fetal development at any stage during pregnancy, yet 13 percent of Vermont mothers reported drinking some alcohol while pregnant. 68 percent report having done so in the three months prior to pregnancy.

Increasing the percentage of pregnant women who abstain from alcohol is one of the Department of Health’s Healthy Vermonters 2020 goals. To help meet this important objective, the Health Department launched “049 = Zero Alcohol for Nine Months” in 2013.

Through the 049 initiative, the department works with the state’s health care community to ensure providers are actively advising women to not drink alcohol during pregnancy. In the first two years of the initiative, nearly 870 health care providers and more than 170 medical practices have received 049 information and education materials about how alcohol can affect a baby’s development.

“We’ve made great strides in raising awareness,” said Barbara Cimaglio, deputy commissioner for the Department of Health. “A woman who receives advice from her health care provider to not drink while pregnant is less likely to use alcohol, and more likely to give birth to a healthy child.”

“This is such a winnable battle,” said Cimaglio. “Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders are 100 percent preventable.”

For more information about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, visit <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fasd/>

Learn more about 049 = Zero Alcohol for Nine Months: <http://www.healthvermont.gov/adap/049/>

For health news, alerts and information, visit [healthvermont.gov](http://healthvermont.gov)

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