



**Media release**

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**Alcohol and pregnancy research sends confusing message**

Alcohol Healthwatch is concerned by the conclusions reached by another highly questionable piece of research suggesting that light drinking during pregnancy presents no risk to child development.

The research, published in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* this week, has drawn criticism from both New Zealand and Australian experts who say the study's methodology means we cannot be confident about its findings.

The study found that mothers who drank up to one or two drinks per occasion during pregnancy did not increase their children's risk of behavioural difficulties or cognitive defects compared with children of non-drinking mothers.

Alcohol Healthwatch Health Promotion Advisor Christine Rogan says the research methods used would not detect any subtle effects on the brain caused from lower levels of drinking. Neuropsychological testing is required for this and this wasn't done.

"This is the second study published in recent times, using parent interview methods to reach the same conclusions.

"Both studies contradict thirty years of science that concludes there is no known safe level of alcohol consumption for pregnancy. We must promote a message of no alcohol use during pregnancy," says Rogan.

"The worst thing we can do is send a conflicting message to mums and future mums that alcohol might be ok when we know it isn't."

The advice from the Ministry of Health to New Zealand mothers is to abstain from drinking alcohol during pregnancy, when planning pregnancy and when breastfeeding. It also advises that stopping drinking at any time is beneficial to the health of the child.

**Ends**

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