

**Leeds, Grenville and Lanark
District Health Unit
Media Release**

September 7, 2016



**Health Unit promotes *When it comes to alcohol...Zero matters* and
anti-stigma messaging in support of
Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Awareness Day.**

The Health Unit is encouraging the community to consider, *When it comes to alcohol...Zero matters*. When pregnant, planning a pregnancy or breastfeeding the safest choice is to drink **no** alcohol at all.

September 9th is FASD Awareness Day.

FASD describes the full range of effects that can result from a woman drinking alcohol during pregnancy.¹ Due to the increase in public awareness of FASD, drinking alcohol during pregnancy has become unfairly stigmatized.² The Leeds Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit wish to break down the stigma. All women and their children deserve to be treated with support and respect. A woman may drink during her pregnancy for many reasons. To prevent additional harm and stigmatization it's important for us to consider these reasons. She may not know she is pregnant; she may have received misleading advice; or she may be using alcohol as a coping mechanism for stressful life events.²

"Communities, family, friends, and service providers all have an important role to play in not only the prevention of FASD, but in the respectful treatment and care of moms, children, and families" says Bonnie Schnittker, Public Health Nurse at the Leeds, Grenville, and Lanark District Health Unit.

For more information on zero matters and anti-stigma messaging, follow the Rethink Your Drinking Campaign Trail at: http://www.healthunit.org/alcoholdrug/alcohol/rethink_your_drinking.html
You can also connect with us on Facebook and Twitter @LGLHealthunit.

-30-

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¹ Best Start Resource Centre. Be safe have an alcohol free pregnancy. Toronto: author, Revised 2012.

² NeuroDevNet. "FASD & stigma: Why do women drink when pregnant?" <http://www.neurodevnet.ca/news/fasd-stigma-why-do-women-drink-when-pregnant> (accessed August 15, 2016).