



Counselor's Guide

For

**A Step to a Healthier Baby
Workbook**

Acknowledgements

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Counselor's Guide for A Step to a Healthier Baby

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Purpose of Guide

This *Counselor's Guide* will help you prepare to deliver a brief alcohol intervention using *A Step to a Healthier Baby Workbook*. The brief intervention is for pregnant women that drink. The intervention is delivered by reviewing and discussing with the women each page of the *Workbook*. The *Workbook* is provided to the women at the end of the intervention.

This guide describes how to review and discuss with women each page of the *A Step to a Healthier Baby Workbook*. The *Workbook* page is provided on the left-hand page and the suggested text for you is provided on the right-hand page. In essence, the intervention is reading the booklet, elaborating on some information, engaging the woman, and responding to her comments.

The brief alcohol intervention:

- Prompts thinking of the consequences of drinking during pregnancy and the benefits of stopping.
- Reviews risky drinking situations and coping strategies.
- Explains what a standard drink is.
- Asks for a commitment to not drink in the next month or to cut down if not drinking is not acceptable.
- Provides referrals for additional assistance to stop drinking for those needing additional assistance.
- Explains there will be followup at the next visit.

What to do during followup visits is described in Appendix A. Each woman needs to be asked if she drank alcohol in the past month at these visits. The followup visit intervention:

- Reinforces the need to not drink during pregnancy.
- Discusses drinking using the *Workbook*.
- Asks for a commitment to not drink in the next month.
- Informs the woman that there will be followup at the next visit.

There are pages in the client *Workbook* where you or the woman are to circle or write things. At these pages, ask the woman if she would like to circle or write things or if she would like you to do it. Some woman may not be confident in their reading and writing skills. You do not want them to feel awkward.

Appendix B lists common questions from health professionals about talking to pregnant women about drinking along with practical responses to these questions.

For more information about alcohol and pregnancy and fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, contact:

- The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Center for Excellence at www.fasdcenter.samhsa.gov or 1-866-786-7327
- The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism at www.niaaa.nih.gov.

This Workbook is Yours

This workbook is for pregnant women. This workbook will help you and your counselor discuss your alcohol use.

- The workbook is yours to keep.
- There are questions for you in the workbook.
- Write your answers in the Workbook.

Welcome Woman to the Visit

Introduce Yourself

- As a [give job title-for example, WIC nutritionist or Healthy Start Counselor], I am working with mothers receiving [name program-for example, Healthy Start or WIC services].

Provide Workbook and Describe Purpose

- This workbook is yours to keep.
 - It will help you and me discuss your alcohol use.
 - You may write in the workbook as we go through it.
 - If you prefer, I can write in it for you. *(Some women may not feel comfortable with reading and writing. Offer to circle items or write notes for them.)*

Assure Her of Confidentiality and Benefits

- Please remember that all of your answers are confidential.
- Your answers will not affect your participation in [name program-for example, Healthy Start or WIC benefits] in any way.
- Our talk can only help you and your baby.

If you drink, your unborn baby drinks too.

Drinking when you are pregnant can
harm your unborn baby.



Drinking during pregnancy can cause these problems.

Major Problems

- Small Size
- Deformed Face
- Heart Problems
- Mental Retardation

Other Problems

- Eating and Sleeping
- Hyperactivity
- Attention
- Language Development
- Memory
- Learning
- Hearing and Vision

Describe the Consequences of Drinking During Pregnancy

Read “If you drink, your unborn baby drinks too.”

- Many women do not know this. When women drink alcoholic drinks (like beer, wine, or liquor) during pregnancy, the alcohol reaches their baby.

Describe the Problems Caused by Drinking During Pregnancy

- “Drinking when you are pregnant can harm your unborn baby.”
- Some babies whose mothers drank during pregnancy:
 - Are born very small and have a hard time growing healthy and strong.
 - Have faces that are deformed or look different (if asked: no upper lip, smooth between nose and lip, and smaller eye openings).
 - Have problems in other parts of their bodies, like their hearts.
 - Grow up to have trouble learning in school and may be mentally retarded.
- Even if they don't have such serious problems, some babies:
 - Are difficult to care for because they have trouble eating or sleeping.
 - Are very active when they are growing up and have trouble paying attention in school.
 - Are slower to learn to talk and develop language.
 - Have trouble remembering things and doing well in school.
 - Have problems with their hearing or vision.

Elicit the Woman's Response to this Information

- Which of these problems are of most concern to you?
(If appropriate, validate her concerns by saying “Many women say that.”)
- *See Appendix A for common concerns and responses to the concerns.*

**You can have a healthier baby
if you quit drinking.**



There is no safe level of drinking
while you are pregnant.

Encourage the Woman to Not Drink During Pregnancy

- I know that you want the best for your baby and that you want the baby to grow up healthy and strong. “You can have a healthier baby if you quit drinking now.”
- “There is no known safe level of drinking while you are pregnant.” So it is important not to drink alcohol for the rest of your pregnancy.
- Stopping drinking is *A Step to a Healthier Baby*—a very important step.
(*Show her the title of the Workbook on the cover.*)
- We will next talk about how you can do this.

Risky Situations

People drink for different reasons. Try to think about what causes you to drink. Circle the ones that apply to you.

When do you feel like drinking?

When feeling:

- Depressed
- Frustrated
- Bored
- Nervous
- Lonely
- Angry
- Failure

At these times:

- Watching TV
- At parties
- With meals
- When smoking
- After work
- Weekends
- Arguments
- Feel happy drinking
- Celebrations
- When cannot sleep

Because of or with:

- Children
- Family
- Friends
- Other people

Are there any other reasons why you drink? List these below.

Identify the Risky Situations in Which the Woman Feels Like Drinking

Review Risky Situations in Which the Woman May Feel Like Drinking

- People drink for different reasons. Try to think about the times and reasons you drink as I review these lists.
 - **Feelings.** Some people drink to avoid coping with unpleasant feelings like being angry, depressed, or lonely. Some use alcohol to help them deal with stressful situations or other feelings.
 - **Specific Times.** Some people drink at specific times or places like with meals, at parties or celebrations, or on weekends with friends.
 - **People.** Some people drink with family, friends, or other people or because of these people.
- People sometimes are prompted to drink because of things around them, sometimes without even thinking about it. Seeing alcoholic drinks, being with people who are drinking, or being in stressful situations can prompt drinking.

Ask the Woman to Circle and List the Things That Cause Her to Drink

- Let's circle the times or reasons listed here that apply to you. Or do you want me to circle them? Can you describe a time or situation when you felt like you wanted to drink? (*Allow the woman time to give specific examples. Give her encouragement when she is able to identify clearly what prompted her to drink.*)
- Are there any other reasons that are not listed that might cause you to want to drink? If there are other reasons, let's write them down in your workbook and we can talk about them. (*Go over other risky situations that she identifies. Ask her to write them down or offer to write them down for her. Give her encouragement when she is able to identify specific things that prompted her to drink.*)
- We call these reasons or times when you drink, "risky situations." These are times when you have a higher risk or chance of drinking.

Ways to Cope with Risky Situations

It is important to figure out how you can resist drinking in risky situations. Here are some ways.

- Grab a snack
- Telephone a friend
- Talk to a neighbor
- Go for a walk
- Exercise
- Read a magazine
- Tell yourself that drinking will not improve the situation
- Drink water, soda, juice, or other drinks without alcohol

List ways you could cope with risky situations without drinking alcohol:

Think about these situations and the ways you will cope without drinking alcohol.

Talk About Ways to Cope with or Stay Away from Risky Situations

Introduce the Idea of Coping with or Staying Away from Risky Situations

- People often can think of good ways to not drink in a risky situation. Or people can decide to stay away from some places or situations that make them want to drink.
- It is important to figure out how you can stay away from risky situations or to resist drinking when they occur.

Review Examples of Ways to Cope with Risky Situations

- Here are some of the ways to cope that many people have found to be useful. Some people, when they feel the urge to drink: *(point to these in the book)*
 - Grab a snack or eat something
 - Telephone a friend
 - Talk to a neighbor
 - Go for a walk or exercise
 - Read a magazine
 - Tell yourself that drinking will not improve the situation
 - Drink something else, like water, juice, or soda
- To deal with unpleasant feelings or being stressed out without drinking, some people tell themselves that drinking will not help relieve their stress or improve the situation.

Ask the Woman to Circle or List Ways to Cope with Her Risky Situations

- Let's look at ways you can resist the urge to drink when you feel like drinking.
- Let's circle ways in which you can cope with risky situations. *(Give her time to circle coping strategies or circle them for her. Discuss each one with her. Try to get her to be as specific as she can be.)*
- *(Review her risky situations circled on the previous page.)* What are ways you could cope in these situations without using alcohol? *(Give her time to think about any other coping strategies to help her not drink.)*

What is one standard drink?

Each one of these is one standard drink.



One standard drink is
12 ounces of regular beer or light beer
(5% pure alcohol)



One standard drink is
12 ounces of wine cooler
(5% pure alcohol)



One standard drink is
5 ounces of table wine
(12% pure alcohol)



One standard drink is
1½ ounces of hard liquor
(gin, rum, vodka, whiskey)
(40% pure alcohol)

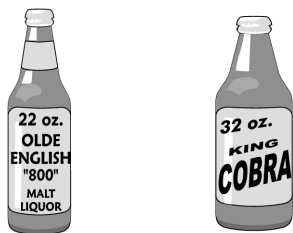


One standard drink is
3 ounces of fortified wine
(18-20% pure alcohol)

Explain What a Standard Drink Is

- Now, let's talk about what a standard drink is.
(Point to the pictures while explaining.)
- Each of these is a standard drink and has the same amount of alcohol in them:
 - A 12-ounce can or bottle of regular or light beer.
 - A 12-ounce bottle of wine cooler.
 - A 5-ounce glass of wine.
 - A shot or 1½ ounces of hard liquor.
 - A 3-ounce glass of fortified wine such as sherry.

These are more than one standard drink.



=



7.5% or 6%
pure alcohol

3 cans of regular beer



=



8% pure alcohol

5 ¹/₃ cans of regular beer



=



6% pure alcohol
40 ounces

4 cans of regular beer

Discuss Drinks That are More Than One Standard Drink

Review the Drinks on the Page (*Point to the pictures as you review.*)

- Some drinks come in larger containers and are equal to more than one standard drink. Different brands can have different amounts of alcohol. For example,
 - A 22-ounce bottle of Old English or a 32-ounce bottle of King Cobra contains about 3 standard drinks. That is the same amount of alcohol in 3 cans of regular beer.
 - A 40-ounce bottle of Saint Ides Malt Liquor contains about $5\frac{1}{3}$ standard drinks. That is the same amount of alcohol in $5\frac{1}{3}$ cans of regular beer.
 - A 40-ounce bottle of Colt 45 contains 4 standard drinks. That is the same amount of alcohol in 4 cans of regular beer.

Mention How Many Standard Drinks Are in Mixed Drinks

- How much alcohol is in a mixed drink depends on the liquor used to make it and how much is used. Some drinks include 3 or 4 shots of liquor. That would be 3 or 4 standard drinks in one glass.

Set Your Goal

Decide on a drinking limit for yourself for the next month. A reasonable goal for pregnant women is not drinking any alcohol.

What would you like to do?

Stop drinking

Cut down

How sure are you that you can stop or cut down on your drinking for **one month**?

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|---|
| 1
I cannot stop/
cut down
drinking | 2
I am not sure
if I can cut
down/stop
drinking | 3
Maybe I can
cut down/stop
drinking | 4
Probably I can
cut down/stop
drinking | 5
I am sure I can
cut down/stop
drinking |
|---|---|---|--|---|

Set a Drinking Goal

Ask the Woman to Set a Drinking Goal

I would like to talk to you about setting a drinking goal. As you can see, there are two options, “Stop drinking” or “Cut down.” A reasonable goal for pregnant women is not drinking any alcohol. Think about how much alcohol you drink now. You need to set a goal that is right for you.

Would you be willing to set a goal to stop drinking during your pregnancy?

If she says, “Yes,” have her put an “X” in the “Stop drinking” box.

If she says, “No” ask: If you feel you are not ready to stop drinking yet, are you willing to set a goal of cutting down as much as you can?

If she says, “Yes,” have her put an “X” in the “Cut down” box.

If she says, “No,” say: It is your choice to reduce or abstain from alcohol but there is risk to your baby if you continue to drink. Over the next few days, please think about problems drinking can cause (page 2 of the Workbook). Think about the benefits of stopping drinking during your pregnancy (page 3 of your Workbook). I am willing to help you when you are ready. It is your choice.

Ask How Sure the Woman is That She Can Meet Her Goal

On a scale of 1 to 5, rate how sure you are that you can [stop drinking; lower your drinking] for 1 month.

(Point to options 1 to 5, allow her to circle the one she wants, and then repeat that option. For example, if she says she thinks that she can cut down on her drinking and she circles option 4, then say, “So, you think you can probably cut down on your drinking?”

If she selects option 1 and says she cannot cut down or stop drinking, tell her you can arrange for her to obtain assistance so she will be able to stop or cut down on her drinking. See page 25, “Provide an Active Referral.”

Drinking Goals

What will be the maximum you will drink during the next month?

Maximum number
of days you will
drink per week

x

Maximum number
of drinks per day

=

Maximum number
of drinks in a
week

Agree on What is the Maximum the Woman Plans to Drink

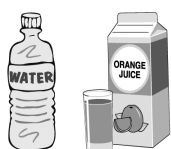
Set a Specific Drinking Goal with Those with a Goal to Stop Drinking

- You have indicated that you will not drink at all during the next month. Let's fill in these boxes. (Let the woman enter the numbers or do it for her.)
- So, the maximum number of days you will drink next month is zero.
- The maximum number of drinks per day will be zero.
- The maximum number of drinks per week is zero.
- Does this describe what you plan to do in the next month?
- This is like a contract or agreement that we have. We will review your progress toward this goal at your next visit. I would like to reassure you that this information will be kept confidential in our clinic. *Write the goal in her record.*

Set a Specific Drinking Goal with Those with a Goal to Cut Down

- You have indicated that you plan to cut down on your drinking during the next month. Now let's set a drinking goal. Let's look at what your upper limit will be for the next month.
- What will be the maximum number of **days per week** you will drink?
(*Have her give an answer.*)
- What will be the maximum number of **drinks per day** you will drink?
(*Have her give an answer.*)
- Okay, the maximum number of days you will drink per week is _____, times the maximum number of drinks per day which is _____, equals a total of _____ drinks in a week. Is _____ the maximum number of drinks you plan to consume per week in the next month? (*Do not indicate in any way your feelings about her decision to continue to drink.*)
- This is like a contract or agreement that we have. We will review your progress toward this goal at your next visit. I would like to reassure you that this information will be kept confidential in our clinic. *Write the goal in her record.*

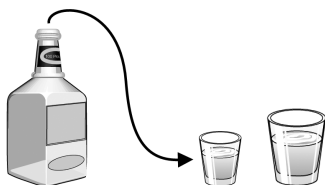
If you cannot stop drinking right now, here are ways to cut down.



Drink juice, soda, or water instead of alcohol



Sip your drinks



Measure your drinks



Add a lot of water to hard liquor
(whiskey, rum, gin)



Eat food when you drink



Do not drink from the bottle

Review Ways to Cut Down on Drinking

Skip This Page if Woman Said She Will Stop Drinking

- Now let's look at ways you can cut down on your drinking.
 - You can drink soda or juice instead of alcohol.
 - You can sip your drinks to try to make them last longer.
 - You can measure out your drinks rather than pouring directly from the bottle.
 - You can add a lot more water to hard liquor.
 - You can reduce the desire for alcohol if you eat food when you drink.
 - You can only drink from a glass and not drink directly from a bottle of an alcoholic beverage. If you drink from the bottle, you are likely to drink more than you think you are drinking.
- You can use these tips to meet your goal. Your goal is to drink the same amount or less than the maximum you just set as your goal.
- **As you meet your goal to cut down, please think about making a goal to stop drinking.** You can try to stop drinking for a week. You may find it easier than you think.

Visit Summary

We have covered a lot today. Think of the points below over the next few weeks. Remember, you are changing a habit, and that can be hard work. It will become easier with time.

- **Remember your goal to stop or cut down your drinking.**
- Tell your drinking goal to helpful people—people who will help you achieve your goal.
- Reread your workbook.
- Think each day about the reasons you are changing your drinking. Think about your reasons when you eat, brush your teeth, or during other things you do each day.
- If you are tempted to drink and do not drink, feel happy with yourself. You are breaking your old habit.
- When you feel you want to drink, tell yourself the feeling will pass.
- At the end of each week, think about how many days you did not drink.
- Some people have days when they drink too much. If this happens to you, start the next day fresh. Return to your goal. **Do not give up.**
- Your health care visits are important. Please remember to keep your next appointment.

You will do well!

Summarize the Visit and Close

Encourage Follow Through

- We have covered a lot today.
- I know that you want the best for your baby and will try hard to honor the agreement we have made. I will follow up with you at your next visit.
- Remember that you are changing a habit, and that can be hard work. It will get easier and we will work with you. You are changing your drinking to have a healthier baby.

Highlight Key Points in the Workbook *Visit Summary*

(Review the points in the Visit Summary; at least the first four and last two listed.

Remind the woman that the workbook is hers as you hand it to her. Suggest that she keep it handy and review it over the next week or so.)

Close the Visit *(If a referral is to be provided, see next page.)*

- Don't forget that what we discussed today is confidential. It will not affect your [WIC or Healthy Start] benefits or our visits in any way.
- I look forward to your success. I know that you can achieve your goal.

Complete the "Process Information About Visit" Form

(After the woman leaves, fill out her drinking goal, indicate how long the session took, and other information requested on the evaluation form. Then please attach this form to her questionnaire packet.)

Provide an Active Referral for Assistance to Stop Drinking (As Needed)

Determine if the woman meets the criteria for referral set by your agency.

Obtain Agreement for Referral with the Woman

- Based on what you have told me, I believe you could benefit from a visit to _____. The counselor there can help you stop drinking. As we discussed, stopping drinking during pregnancy will help you have a healthier baby. May we make an appointment for you?
- *Make the appointment with the referral source before woman leaves.*

Obtain Agreement to Attend the Referral Appointment

- We have made an appointment with _____ on (month, day, time).
- Do you agree to go to the appointment?
- What ways can you think of that will help you remember to go to this appointment?
- Is there anything that might make you miss the appointment or make it hard for you to keep the appointment?
- *Write down appointment time and place and name of the counselor (if known) in the woman's Workbook.*
- I will have someone call to remind you about the appointment.
- I believe this is a great thing you are doing for you and your baby.

Appendix A

Followup Visits: What to Do

Followup visits are an essential part of the intervention. At the end of the first visit, you should let the woman know that you will follow up and ask her about her drinking at the next visit. Asking about her drinking at the next visit does three things:

- Reinforces with the woman that drinking during pregnancy is an important issue.
- Gives you an opportunity to continue the intervention. You will be able to congratulate those that have stopped drinking and work further with those that have not stopped.
- Helps the woman set her drinking goal for the next month. (The drinking goal is for one month.)

Procedures for the Second and Subsequent Visits

Every woman needs to be asked if she drinks at followup visits. The intervention by the counselor will depend on whether the woman reports having drunk in the past 30 days. All followup visits should include resetting of the drinking goal for the next month.

You will refer to the selected pages in the *Workbook* in the manner you did in the first visit. You do not need to provide the woman with the copy of the *Workbook*, unless you think it will be helpful. Times when it is helpful to provide the *Workbook* include when a woman reports drinking at the followup visit or when she wants another copy.

Followup Visits For Women Who Say They Did Not Drink in the Past 30 Days

Congratulate Her and Set a New Drinking Goal

- You are doing what is best for your baby by not drinking. You can have a healthier baby by not drinking during your pregnancy. (Show page 3 of the *Workbook*.)
- Can we set a goal of not drinking for the next month? (Show her page 8 of the *Workbook*. This is page 16 in this *Counselor's Guide*. Follow the procedures on page 17 of this *Counselor's Guide*.)

Ask How Sure the Woman is That She Can Meet Her Goal

- On a scale of 1 to 5, rate how sure you are you can not drink in the next month. (Show her page 8 of the *Workbook*, which is page 16 in this *Counselor's Guide*.)

Set a Specific Drinking Goal for the Next Month

- What is the maximum you will drink during the next month? (Show her page 9 of the *Workbook*, which is page 18 of the *Counselor's Guide*. Follow the procedures on page 19 of this *Counselor's Guide*.)

Summarize the Visit and Promise to Followup at Her Next Visit

- Remember your goal is not to drink during the next month. You are doing a great job for your baby by not drinking.
- If you feel like drinking, remember the “ways to cope” we discussed in the previous visit. “Ways to cope” included grabbing a snack, talking to a friend, going for a walk, drinking something without alcohol in it. This is on page 5 of your *Workbook*. Would you like to review this again?
- I will follow up with you about your drinking at your next visit. I know you will do well.

Followup Visits For Women Who Say They Did Drink in the Past 30 Days

(Followup visits for those that are drinking are essentially a repeat of the first-visit intervention, with some variations.)

Review the Importance of Not Drinking

- Are you drinking less now than before you were pregnant? (If so, congratulate her for moving in the right direction.)
- As we discussed before, you can have a healthier baby if you quit drinking. There is no safe level of drinking while you are pregnant. So it is important not to drink alcohol during your pregnancy. (Show her page 3 of the *Workbook*, which is page 6 of this *Counselor's Guide*.)

Ask About Situations When the Woman Drank and Ways She Could Cope without Drinking

- In our last visit, we talked about “risky situations”—times when you feel like drinking. Since our last visit:
 - Did you have times when you felt like drinking, but you did not drink?
 - Can you describe one of those times? (Show her page 4 of the *Workbook*, which is page 8 in this *Counselor's Guide*.)
 - What did you do instead of drinking? (Show her page 5 of the *Workbook*, which is page 10 in this *Counselor's Guide*.)
- Can you tell me about times when you felt like drinking and you did drink? (Again, show her page 4 of the *Workbook*). Let's look at how you can either stay away from these situations or ways to cope.
 - How could you stay away from this situation in the next month?
 - What could you do instead of drinking in this situation? (Show her page 5 of the *Workbook* for ideas.)
 - Let's write down what you plan to do instead of drinking in this situation. (Write her planned action(s) in the space on page 5 of the *Workbook*, which is page 10 of this *Counselor's Guide*.)

Review Problems Drinking Can Cause and Set a New Drinking Goal

- Would it be helpful to you to review the problems drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause? (If she says, “Yes,” review page 2 of the *Workbook*, which is page 4 of this *Counselor's Guide*. You can begin the review by saying, “As we discussed before...”)
- Let's talk about setting a drinking goal for the next month. (Show her pages 8 and 9 of the *Workbook*. Follow the procedures on pages 17 and 19 of this *Counselor's Guide*.)

Summarize the Visit and Promise to Follow Up at Her Next Visit

- Remember your goal is to [not drink/cut down] during the next month.
- I know you want the best for your baby and will try hard to honor the agreement we have made. I will follow up with you at your next visit.
- (Review the points in the *Visit Summary* on page 11 of the *Workbook*, which is page 22 of this *Counselor's Guide*. Summarize other elements of the visit, as appropriate. See page 23 of this *Counselor's Guide*.)

Appendix B

Health Provider and Client Concerns and Responses to Them

(From Mary J. O'Connor, *UCLA Screening and Brief Intervention for Alcohol Reduction or Cessation: Client Centered Care*)

These are some examples of concerns that many health providers have when talking to women about their use of alcohol. Following each question is a list of some of the possible responses.

Concern: Will women become upset with me if I start asking “personal questions” about their alcohol use?

Response:

- Reassure the woman that the alcohol screening procedures are a part of the routine for all clients.
- Women who become irritable with alcohol screening questions often have personal or family problems associated with alcohol use. These women can benefit from a discussion about their drinking.

Concern: Who should be advised to become totally abstinent?

Response:

- Pregnant women.
- Women who are trying to become pregnant. Damage to the fetus can occur prior to pregnancy recognition.
- Women who are not using effective contraception. The chances of an unplanned pregnancy for someone who is drinking are quite high, so it is best to advise women to use effective contraception if continuing to drink.
- Women who are breastfeeding. Alcohol can be passed to the infant in breast milk. Some research shows that infants exposed to alcohol-tainted breast milk actually prefer the taste when given a choice between it and regular breast milk.

Concern: What do I do if a woman states that she would like to cut down or stop drinking, but does not believe she can?

Response:

- Talk to her about trying to stop drinking during her pregnancy for the health of her baby, provide brief intervention.
- Ask her if she would like to get help for her drinking.
- If she agrees to seek help, make an appointment for her at a local alcohol treatment program while she is still in your office.

Concern: What if the woman says she does not want to cut down or stop drinking when I am conducting a brief intervention with her?

Response:

- It is your choice to reduce or abstain from alcohol but there is risk to your baby if you continue to drink.
- Please think over the next few days about problems drinking can cause on page 2 of the Workbook. Think about the benefits from stopping drinking during your pregnancy (page 3 of your Workbook).
- I am willing to help you when you are ready. It is your choice.

Concern: What if a woman is worried that it is too late to stop drinking because the harm has already been done to her baby.

Response:

- It is never too late to stop drinking and the sooner you stop drinking, the better the outcome for the baby.

Concern: What if a woman says that her best friend drank throughout pregnancy and her child is fine.

Response:

- Women metabolize alcohol at different rates based upon their genetic makeup so that one woman may be able to drink more than another woman with fewer ill effects to the fetus. At this point, we have no reliable way of testing for this so there are no guarantees that your baby will have no ill effects. The best advice that we have at this time is not to drink during pregnancy.

Concern: What should I tell my friends when they offer me a drink?

Response:

- No thanks. I am pregnant and there is no safe level of drinking during pregnancy. I know you want me to have a healthy baby.

Concern: I don't really want to stop drinking.

Response:

- I understand your reluctance to stop. How about trying to stop for the next week and we will meet again and discuss your progress? It may not be as hard as you think to make a change.

Concern: What should I do if I get the urge to drink?

Response:

- Remember the coping steps we went over when we talked about risky situations.
- Try practicing those steps until we meet again.
- If you do have a drink, don't be discouraged. Start each day anew and tell yourself that you will not drink today. Take it day by day.
- If you have the urge to drink and you do not drink, reward yourself for a job well done.

Concern: Do you think I should have an abortion if my baby is already damaged?

Response:

- While having an abortion is a personal choice, it is important to stop drinking now to minimize any potential problems to your baby. If you are worried, you can have the baby followed by a pediatrician to make sure that everything is okay.