



the women's
the royal women's hospital
victoria australia

YOU AND YOUR BOORAI: TAKING CARE DURING PREGNANCY

This booklet is for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their families who are affected by alcohol and other drugs.

This resource is for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who are pregnant and their families. It will help you find ways to get the support you need and take steps to achieve the things most important to you; a healthy pregnancy and a healthy boorai (baby).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities value, respect and care for mothers and boorais. We recognise that history is important and that community and culture contribute to your boorai's growth into a strong and healthy person.

The Royal Women's Hospital acknowledges and pays respect to the People of the Kulin Nations, the traditional owners of the country on which our sites at Parkville and Sandringham stand and we pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

We wish to acknowledge the support of the Victorian Government and thank those who generously contributed to the development of this resource, in particular the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation Inc., Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, Njernda Aboriginal Corporation, Echuca Regional Health and our own Aboriginal Liaison Unit, Badjurr-Bulok Wilam.

ABOUT THE IMAGES



The Mother and Boorai Circle

The large sitting symbol represents the mother and the smaller sitting symbol the boorai. The circles between them represent the eternal bond they share; the circle does not have an end point. As the circles grow larger so does their bond.

The four larger circles that connect around them represent health, love, support and positivity. These four elements are important to surround our boorais with; from conception through pregnancy, birth and beyond.



Healthy Boorai

The smallest circle in the centre represents a healthy boorai beginning as an egg in their mother's womb. Each circle that surrounds it represents growth and development of the boorai. The semi-circles on the outer represent all the supports needed to raise a healthy boorai. It represents the mother, father, aunties, grandparents, close friends and family, health professionals and other support services.

It is the responsibility of the whole community to ensure our boorais grow up strong and healthy. Finally, the hands wrapped around the sacred boorai circle represent holding, nurturing and loving our boorais.



Breastfeeding

The image is of the breast. The yellow drops are colostrum, the special milk that a woman makes in the early days of breastfeeding. Nutritionally, colostrum is very beneficial for your boorai. The path around the image is your journey around breastfeeding. Some women will breeze through while others will have challenges. With good support, persistence and patience though, breastfeeding can be one of the most amazing bonding experiences.

Shakara Montalto
Gunditjmara



To order more copies of *You and your boorai* contact:
E: wwcadmin@thewomens.org.au T: (03) 8345 3037

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Terms

We use the word boorai in this book, because it is common to many Aboriginal languages throughout Victoria. The book will be used by families from outside Victoria and we hope you understand the importance of using words that are meaningful to our local communities.



YOU AND YOUR BOORAI

“They told me that
bubs can already
hear my voice.
It makes it so real”

Sophie



WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR YOU AND YOUR BOORAI

CONNECT

with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support service.

(See contacts on page 30–31)

UNDERSTAND

how alcohol, cigarettes or the drug you are taking affects your pregnancy.

GET HELP

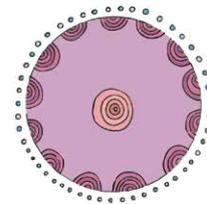
so that you and your boorai can be well.

HAVE REGULAR

pregnancy appointments to make sure your boorai is growing and is well.

TAKE SIMPLE STEPS

to eat well and exercise.



WHAT WE CAN DO FOR YOU AND YOUR BOORAI

THE POWER OF YARNING

A **professional counsellor** is someone outside of your family, who can help you to make positive changes in your life. They can support you to feel calmer and to find ways to stop using drugs. Your health service can support you to find a counsellor.

PREGNANCY CARE

Regular visits with a doctor or midwife are important for making sure that your boorai is growing well.

Some hospitals have an Aboriginal Liaison Officer on site. Some have special maternity care programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Local Aboriginal Health Organisations have a Koorie Maternity Service where you can see both a midwife and an Aboriginal Health Worker.

Health workers are trained to ask all patients if they are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. This is to make sure that you are offered the support that is available to you.

CONNECT WITH YOUR BOORAI

During pregnancy, your boorai is already getting to know you. They can hear your breath, your heartbeat and they can hear the sound of your voice and the other voices around you.

Your boorai will use these sounds to feel secure and comforted from the beginning. At only 24 weeks of pregnancy, you and your boorai are already getting to know each other.



Drug and alcohol counselling can lead to positive changes.

Regular visits with a midwife or doctor are important for your boorai's health.

Identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander may help you to get the support that you need.

EATING WELL

“Being pregnant makes me want to eat better. I’m a pretty good cook... My aunty drops in food sometimes too...think about what vitamins and nutrition the baby might need.”

Zoe

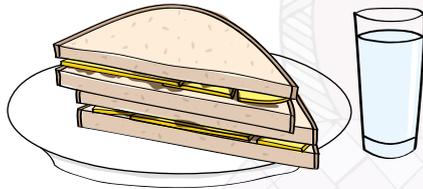


EATING WELL, FOR YOU AND YOUR BOORAI

Eating good food will help you to feel stronger, more energetic and able to cope better with stress.

Different kinds of good food every day will give you the vitamins, minerals and nutrition you and your boorai need.

Eating well is not always easy.



HEALTHY TIPS

- » Try to eat at least three meals a day. Don't let yourself get too hungry.
- » Main meals should include some meat, chicken, fish or eggs with salad or vegetables.
- » Eat more bush foods, freshly cooked fish and shellfish.
- » Eat less fatty meats such as sausages and pies, tinned corn beef and spam.
- » At other times of the day, have a low fat, low sugar snack.
- » Eat more fruit and vegetables. If you don't eat fruit, then have more salad or vegetables. If you don't eat vegetables, have fruit.
- » Don't have too much tea, coffee or coke and avoid 'energy' drinks, as they have too much caffeine. If you're thirsty drink more water.
- » Ask a friend or family member to cook or shop for you if you can't do it yourself.

QUICK IDEAS

Healthy snacks:

- » fruit, fresh or canned in natural juices
- » handful of dried fruit and nuts
- » corn cob
- » cheese and crackers
- » yoghurt or a cup of milk with Milo
- » a slice of fruit bread

Quick and easy meals:

- » eggs on toast
- » cheese toasties
- » baked beans
- » peanut butter or avocado on toast
- » a bowl of cereal, wheat biscuits, muesli or porridge
- » tinned soup and toast
- » tinned tuna or sardines with salad or toast
- » four bean mix with salad
- » hot fresh take-away chicken with vegetables or salad

TEETH

“I just didn’t think about my teeth and that bad teeth might affect the baby. I actually had a tooth taken out in late pregnancy. It was a bit scary. I look after them very well now.”

Madeline



YOUR TEETH

Looking after your teeth is especially important if you take methadone.

Bad teeth and gums can cause your boorai to be born too early. Try and visit a dentist.

If you are pregnant and you have a concession card, dental care is free and you don't have to wait.

To find your local dental service, call 1300 360 054.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

BRUSH REGULARLY

Sometimes it's hard to brush your teeth when you are feeling sick.

Brush at times when you are feeling ok and at other times wash your mouth out with water (especially after vomiting).

DENTAL CHECK-UPS

Regular check-ups are important and even more so when you are a drug and alcohol user.

TRY AND VISIT A DENTIST

SMOKING

“Giving up smoking when I was pregnant was easy. But after the baby was born I found it hard not to start again. I had a few after the baby was born...then I gave myself rewards when I didn't have one...”

Andrea



SMOKING WHEN YOU ARE PREGNANT CAN:

- » lead to stillbirth, miscarriage and premature birth
- » stop your boorai from growing properly
- » affect your boorai's ability to breathe properly after the birth
- » lead to SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome).

WHAT YOU CAN DO

TALK
to a doctor,
they can help.

REMEMBER
every cigarette you
don't smoke is good
for your boorai.

**CALL
QUITLINE**
13 78 48

WHAT CAN FAMILY DO?

STOP
smoking around
pregnant women.

GIVE UP
smoking too.

AND REMEMBER...

EVERY
cigarette you don't
smoke during
pregnancy is a positive
step for both of you.

A SMOKE FREE
pregnancy is best
for your boorai.

AFTER YOUR BOORAI IS BORN

No-one should smoke around pregnant women and boorais. If you, your partner or members of your family continue to smoke after your boorai is born you will need to:

- » smoke outside
- » only handle your boorai wearing clothes that don't smell of smoke
- » wash your hands and face after smoking and before touching the boorai
- » never smoke in the car, especially if there are kids in the car.

ALCOHOL

It is very dangerous for your boorai if you drink in the early weeks of pregnancy.

Getting drunk at any time during pregnancy can make your boorai sick.

ALCOHOL AND PREGNANCY

Alcohol is not safe during pregnancy.

The safest thing is not to drink at all. What you drink goes directly into your boorai's blood stream.

The most dangerous time to drink is during the early stages of pregnancy.

Getting drunk during pregnancy is very dangerous for your boorai.

Heavy use of alcohol in pregnancy can cause serious and permanent damage to your boorai.

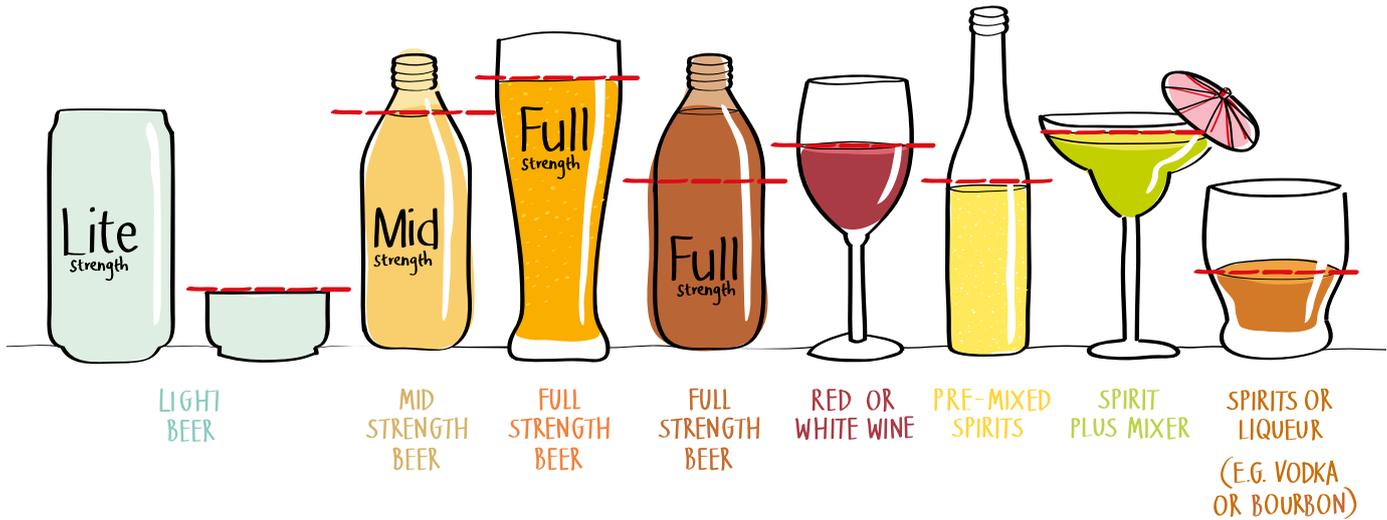
DRINK LESS OR STOP DRINKING

Alcohol use at any stage of your pregnancy is not good for your boorai.

IF YOU CAN'T STOP

get help from your doctor.

STANDARD DRINKS



----- THE RED LINE SHOWS A STANDARD DRINK

DRUG USE

It may be dangerous for your boorai if you suddenly stop taking certain drugs.

Ask a doctor to help you to stop using so that it is safe for your boorai.

DRUG USE DURING PREGNANCY

Most drugs will travel directly into your boorai's bloodstream. What you take, your boorai is taking too.

When you find out you are pregnant, it may be tempting to stop using drugs straight away. With some drugs, this can be very dangerous for your boorai. A health professional can work with you to stop using so that it is safe for your boorai.

It is important not to stop taking drugs without help from a doctor.

USING DRUGS WHEN YOU ARE PREGNANT CAN:

- » affect your boorai's growth, development and overall health
- » cause miscarriage, premature birth or stillbirth
- » increase the possibility of your boorai having a disability
- » increase their chance of dying from SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome).

Boorai's exposed to amphetamines in pregnancy are more likely to:

- » feed poorly
- » be sleepy or irritable
- » be admitted to the special care unit in the hospital.

If you share injecting equipment you can get viruses in your blood such as hepatitis and HIV, which can also affect your boorai.

WHAT TO DO ABOUT YOUR DRUG USE NOW YOU ARE PREGNANT

TALK

to a doctor about the drugs you are taking, even if you are not sure what they are.

FIND OUT

what you need to do to stop.

DO NOT STOP
without help.

PRESCRIPTIONS

If your doctor prescribes tablets for any health condition, make sure they know you are pregnant.

For more about specific drugs and their effects during pregnancy go to www.thewomens.org.au/wm-yyb

AFTER YOUR BOORAI IS BORN

What you drink
your boorai drinks
too. When you
breastfeed, alcohol
gets into your
breast milk.



NEWBORN WITHDRAWAL

If you have been using any drugs or alcohol during pregnancy, your boorai may experience withdrawal after the birth.

You will need to stay in hospital for five to seven days after your boorai is born so they can be carefully watched for signs of withdrawal.

When a newborn boorai is withdrawing from drugs it is called Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS).

COMMON SIGNS ARE:

- » A lot of crying, tremors and jitteriness
- » poor feeding, vomiting and swallowing
- » trouble settling and sleeping
- » trouble with breathing.

If you are treated with methadone or buprenorphine during pregnancy, your boorai may still experience withdrawal after birth. Withdrawal can be treated safely and effectively.

DRUGS AND PARENTING

When you are a parent using drugs, it can be dangerous for your boorai because:

- » you are less aware of your boorai's needs
- » drugs can make you feel sleepy, drowsy and irritable
- » it's harder for you to enjoy being a parent
- » you may have feelings you can't control, especially when you are coming down.

Your early connection with your boorai is very important for their long term emotional and mental health. Using drugs can affect that connection.

FEEDING YOUR BOORAI

Breast milk is far better for boorais than formula milk. It enhances brain and gut development and helps protect boorais from getting coughs, colds and gastro, when they are little.

Breast milk is always ready. It's free, and your boorai will love breastfeeding. It also makes them smell sweet.

You can express your milk and give it in a bottle if you prefer. Breastfeeding is better for you too. It helps your bones stay strong and helps you to bond with your boorai.

If you choose to formula feed try to keep your boorai close and let them know that you are their mum. It's important to clean bottles and teats carefully, and to follow the instructions on the tin. Your boorai can get sick if the milk stays out of the fridge too long, or if it's too strong or too weak.

No matter how you feed your boorai, it's important to have someone else around if you are under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Your boorai needs to be safe at all times.

Ice and other amphetamines pass freely into breast milk. Do not breastfeed at all if you used ice regularly during your pregnancy. If you used ice occasionally, you can do a safety plan with your midwife before you are discharged from hospital.

EXPRESS MILK

If you know you are going to drink, express milk beforehand. Feed that to your boorai until there is no alcohol in your blood. (About an hour for every standard drink).

EVEN IF

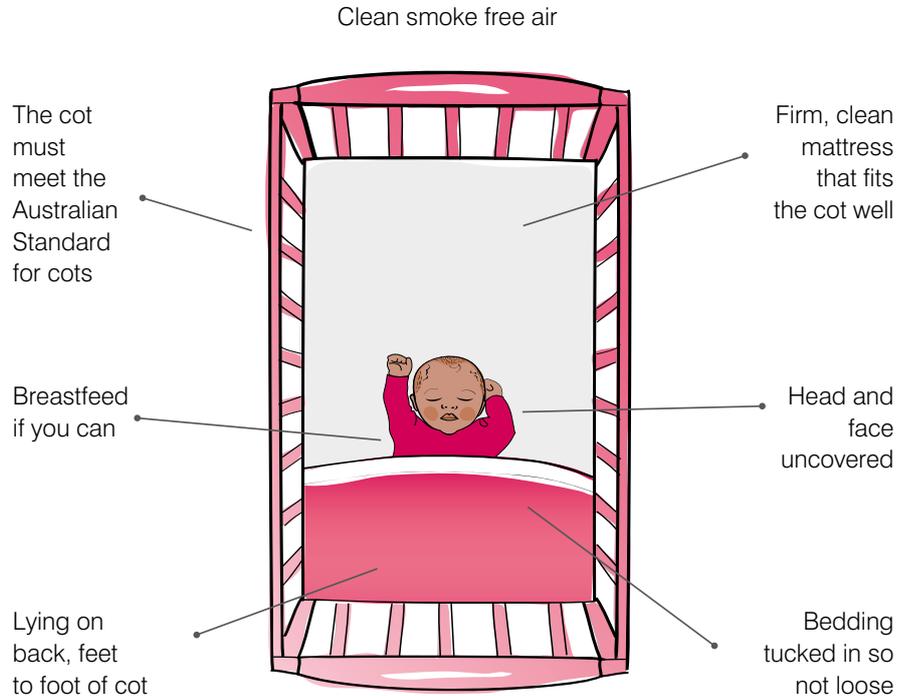
you feel slightly drunk or tipsy it's better to avoid breastfeeding.

SAFE SLEEPING FOR YOUR BOORAI

Sleeping accidents and SIDS are much higher when there has been drug use during pregnancy.

Your boorai needs a safe place to sleep.

It's not safe to have your boorai in your bed with you.



WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Put boorai to sleep
on their back

For the first twelve
months, have their cot
in your room.

Make sure their
face and head
are uncovered.

The mattress needs
to be firm and a good
fit for the cot.
Avoid soft or puffy
bedding and pillows.

The cot should meet
Australian Standards.

Keep your home
smoke-free before
and after the birth.

Make sure that
others caring for your
boorai know how
to keep them safe.

The risk of Sudden
Infant Death Syndrome
(SIDS) or a sleeping
accident is much higher
if you used drugs
or alcohol or you smoked
during pregnancy.

If you plan to use
drugs and alcohol
always make sure there
is an adult, who is not
affected by alcohol or
drugs, available to care
for your boorai.

GROWING TOGETHER AS A FAMILY

During and after your pregnancy, do what you can to be as healthy as possible. Your physical and emotional health is important for you and your boorai. It can take a little time for you to get to know each other.



MAKE TIME
to cuddle your boorai. Hold them close, skin to skin.

LOOK
into your boorai's eyes and talk to them.

ENJOY
connecting with your boorai.

YOU CAN
make your boorai feel safe.



CHILD PROTECTION

All children have the right to grow up safely and to enjoy their childhood without harm, abuse or neglect.



If health professionals suspect a child is at risk of abuse or harm they must contact Child Protection. Child Protection is a government service, which looks out for children who are at risk of harm.

When a child has been reported, Child Protection will learn more about the family and make sure they get the support they need.

Some families have complex problems. Some may be struggling to cope because of money problems or housing. Some may be suffering from the effects of substance use or family violence. Child Protection will make sure they receive the support that they need.

Sometimes a child may be placed in the care of Child Protection or a foster family. This may only be for a very short time until the parent or parents are back on track to care for their child or children. The aim is to do what is right for the child.

In Victoria, families at risk can be supported by Child FIRST or Child Protection, which are both part of the Department of Health and Human Services.

Some families have complex problems. Some may be struggling to cope because of money problems or housing. Some may be suffering from the effects of substance use or family violence. Child Protection will make sure they receive the support that they need.

VIOLENCE MAKES WOMEN SICK

Violence can include physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse.

Violence can include physical, sexual, financial and emotional abuse. It can also be behaviour that isolates you from your friends and family or behaviour that is controlling or threatening. Your partner might be putting you down or making you feel bad about yourself.

Your health professionals can help you to get the right support. There are also numbers at the end of this booklet. You don't have to do it on your own. Give you and your boorai a fresh and positive start.

If you experience violence, seek help.

Your health professionals can help you to get the right support.

If you experience violence, seek help. (See contacts on page 30-31)

VIOLENCE INCLUDES:

BEHAVIOUR

Controlling, threatening
or isolating behaviour

ABUSE

Physical, sexual,
financial or
emotional abuse

YOUR PARTNER

putting you down or
making you feel bad
about yourself

SEEK HELP

If you experience
violence

(See contacts on page 30–31)

CONTACT DETAILS

METROPOLITAN REGION

Victoria Aboriginal Health Service

T: (03) 9419 3000

Dandenong and District Aboriginal Cooperative Ltd (incorporating Bunurong Health Service)

T: (03) 9794 5933

Northern Health T: (03) 8405 8773

Peninsula Health T: (03) 9784 7777

Sunshine Hospital (Western Health)

T: (03) 8345 1333

REGIONAL VICTORIA

GIPPSLAND REGION

Central Gippsland Aboriginal Health Co-op

Morwell T: (03) 5136 5100

Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative

Bairnsdale T: (03) 5152 1922

HUME REGION

Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation

Wodonga T: (02) 6024 7599

Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative

Mooroopna T: (03) 5820 0035

LODDON MALLEE REGION

Mallee District Aboriginal Services

Mildura T: (03) 5018 4102

Njernda Aboriginal Corporation

Echuca T: (03) 5480 6252

Swan Hill Aboriginal Health Service

Swan Hill T: (03) 5032 8600

WESTERN DISTRICT REGION

Gunditjmara Aboriginal Co-op

Warrnambool T: (03) 5564 3344

Wathaurong Aboriginal Health Service

Geelong T: (03) 5277 2038

THE WOMEN'S

Royal Women's Hospital

Cnr Grattan St & Flemington Rd
Parkville

T: (03) 8345 2000 (switchboard)
www.thewomens.org.au

Badjurr-Bulok Wilam

9am-5pm Monday to Friday

T: (03) 8345 3047 or 8345 3048

E: badjurr-bulok.wilam@thewomens.org.au

Women's Alcohol & Drug Service

9.00am-5.00pm Monday to Friday

T: (03) 8345 3931

E: wads@thewomens.org.au

Social Work

T: (03) 8345 3050

Women's Welcome Centre

Free information about a range of women's health issues
T: (03) 8345 3037
1800 442 007 (rural callers, freecall)

Other information available

The Women's also has a range of fact sheets on pregnancy and on specific drugs and their impact on pregnancy and breastfeeding. Go to www.thewomens.org.au

OTHER IMPORTANT NUMBERS

In an emergency Dial 000

Direct Line T: 1800 888 236

For drug and alcohol counselling and referral (freecall, 24/7)

Maternal and Child Health

24 hour help line T: 132 229

Quit Line T: 131 848

Red Nose T: 1300 308 307 (24/7)
rednose.com.au

Safe Steps: Family Violence Response Centre

T: 1800 015 188 (freecall, 24/7)
Information, support & safe accommodation for women & their children.

FAMILY VIOLENCE SERVICES FOR ABORIGINAL WOMEN

Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service

T: 1800 105 303 (freecall)

Elizabeth Morgan House

T: (03) 9482 5744

USEFUL WEBSITES

www.thewomens.org.au/HealthInformation

www.vaccho.org.au

www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au

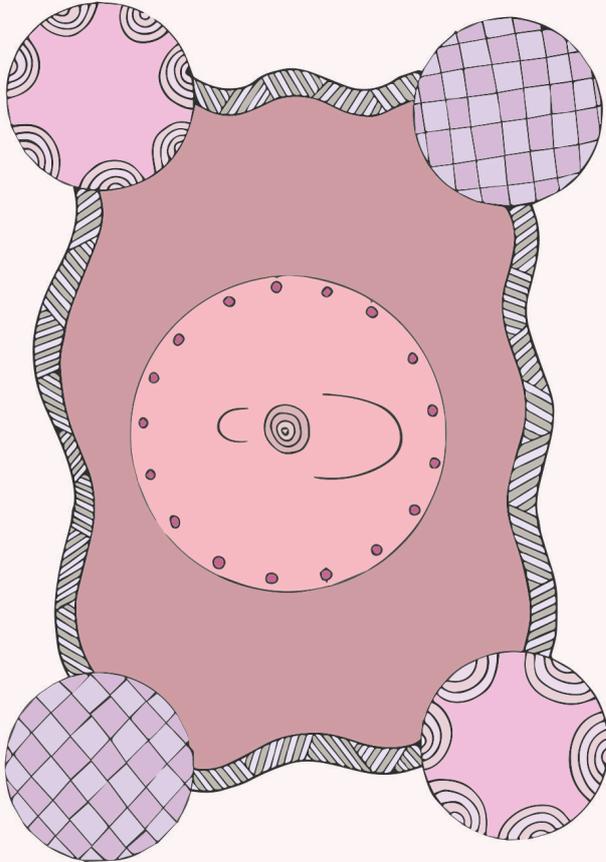
www.vahs.org.au

www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

REFERENCES

The information for this brochure was obtained from:

- » National Clinical Guidelines for the Management of Drug Use during Pregnancy, Birth and the Developmental Years of the Newborn. 2006
- » Red Nose Safe Sleeping Brochure and www.rednose.com.au



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