

How Can a Nurse Use Alcohol Screening and Brief Intervention to Help Prevent Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders?



Isabella Rodriguez is visiting a walk-in primary care clinic for help with chronic migraine headaches.

- 33 years old and a graduate student
- Having unprotected sex with her boyfriend
- Binge drinking on weekends to relax



Lauren Kim is a registered nurse at the clinic.

I want to give Isabella the tools to make healthy choices. She drinks alcohol frequently and she and her boyfriend have sex, but they are not using contraception.

That creates a risk for an alcohol-exposed pregnancy. What should I do to ensure the best outcome for Isabella?



Administer the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (US)

This standardized validated tool will help Lauren evaluate Isabella's alcohol use. Isabella scores in the range of risky drinking.

See [Planning and Implementing Screening and Brief Intervention for Risky Alcohol Use](#), page 34, for more information on the AUDIT (US).

Okay, I'm off to a good start--all screening for alcohol use should start with the AUDIT (US). Now what would be the most effective way to continue?



Lecture and pass judgment

Fails to discuss Isabella's completed AUDIT.

Doesn't ask whether she wishes to change her drinking behavior.

Wow, don't you think you're drinking an awful lot?



Demand abstinence

Doesn't offer harm and risk reduction strategies.

Binge drinking will hurt your health. You should stop drinking.



Refuse to provide other treatment

Requires Isabella's cessation of alcohol use before addressing her other medical concerns.

Why should I help you if you won't listen?



Push the patient

Wears Isabella down until she claims she will stop drinking.

Considers the issue to be fully addressed and does not follow up.

You have to change, now.



Ask permission, follow steps

Begins a respectful conversation about Isabella's AUDIT answers.

Asks if she might consider reducing or stopping her drinking.

Do you mind if I ask some follow up questions?



Elicit pros and cons

Uses open ended questions and reflects Isabella's statements.

What do you like about drinking on the weekends? Can you tell me more about how your hangovers affect your weekend plans?



Provide clear education

Explains the risk of an alcohol-exposed pregnancy--including fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, preterm birth, and miscarriage.

Suggests an effective birth control method.

There is no known safe amount of alcohol to drink while you're pregnant. That includes before you find out you're pregnant.



Offer support and follow up

Sets Isabella up with her migraine treatment plan (the primary reason for her visit) and with an appointment for a contraceptive.

Schedules a follow up appointment to discuss her migraines--and alcohol use.

I'll see you again next month. Thanks for coming in!



It's pretty clear which route I chose to take.

Now Isabella is considering how her alcohol use affects her. And she's going home with the tools she needs to lead a healthier life.



Find out more about FASD and its prevention on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website.



www.cdc.gov/fasd/