

Women's Healthcare of Illinois

Obstetrics, Gynecology, & Urogynecology

www.whcillinois.com

Pregnancy: Alcohol Consumption

When you consume alcohol, so does your baby. Alcohol freely passes through the placenta to your baby. Drinking alcohol during pregnancy increases the chance that a baby will be born affected by a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) are the full spectrum of birth defects that are caused by prenatal alcohol exposure. These effects are life-long and irreversible. The good thing is that they are 100% preventable.

Facts About Alcohol:

Alcohol is a teratogen. Teratogen is a substance known to be harmful to human development. *Alcohol crosses the placenta to your baby.* When you drink alcohol, so does your baby. Therefore, alcohol can be harmful to your baby's development. *All drinks that contain alcohol can be harmful to your baby.*



How does alcohol affect my baby's development?

Your baby is constantly growing and developing throughout these nine months. During the first four weeks of pregnancy, your baby's heart, central nervous system, eyes, arms, and legs are developing. Your baby's brain begins developing around the third week and continues to develop through the rest of your pregnancy. During the third trimester, your baby is rapidly growing in size. If you consume an excessive amount of alcohol during these crucial times of development, you may cause problems for your baby.

Results of excessive amounts of drinking (drinking on a regular basis or binge drinking) can lead to Fetal Alcohol Syndrome or Fetal Alcohol Effects. These are lifetime, irreversible effects that can cause physical, mental and neurobehavioral birth defects.

What if I drank alcohol before I knew I was pregnant?

If you were not aware that you were pregnant and drank alcohol, the best thing you can do now is STOP drinking. The sooner you quit, the better. If you stop drinking now, the chances of damage are decreased.

Is there any safe amount of alcohol to drink?

There is no known amount of alcohol that is safe to consume during pregnancy, but the more you drink, the more you raise your baby's chances of having problems.

Need help with an addiction?

If you are pregnant and have an addiction to alcohol, you can get help from the following organizations:

- National Clearinghouse for Alcohol & Drug Information (800-729-6686)
- National Alcohol & Drug HopeLine 1-800-NCA-CALL (622-2255)



**Remember,
a pregnant woman
never
drinks alone.**

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome is 100% Preventable.

If you're pregnant and needing help with alcohol or substance abuse, remember a pregnant woman never drinks alone. Call 800-933-6363 for a free and confidential support group.