

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASDs)

What are FASDs?

Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause a range of lifelong physical, behavioral, intellectual disabilities known as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD). Some of the behavioral and intellectual disabilities of people with FASDs include: learning disabilities, hyperactivity, difficulty with attention, speech and language delays, low IQ, poor reasoning and judgment skills. People born with FASDs can also have problems with their organs including heart and kidneys.

What causes FASDs?

Alcohol in the mother's blood passes to the baby through the umbilical cord. Therefore, when a pregnant woman drinks alcohol, so does her baby. Since every pregnancy is different, drinking alcohol may hurt one baby more than another. The baby's brain, body, and organs are developing throughout pregnancy and can be affected by exposure to alcohol at any time.

Are some types of alcohol safer to drink during pregnancy than others?

Drinking any type of alcohol can affect your baby's growth and development and cause FASDs. This includes all wines, beer, and mixed drinks.

Is it okay to drink a little or at certain times during pregnancy?

There is no known safe amount of alcohol use during your pregnancy or when you are trying to get pregnant. There is also no safe time to drink when you are pregnant. Alcohol can cause problems for your developing baby throughout your pregnancy including before you know you are pregnant. FASDs are completely preventable if a woman does not drink alcohol during pregnancy so why take the risk?

Is it okay to drink alcohol if I am trying to get pregnant?

You might be pregnant and not know it yet. You probably will not know you are pregnant for up to 4-6 weeks. This means you might be drinking and exposing your developing baby to alcohol without meaning to. Alcohol use during pregnancy can also lead to miscarriage and stillbirth. The best advice is to stop drinking alcohol when you start trying to get pregnant.

Why should I worry about alcohol use if I am not pregnant and not trying to get pregnant?

If you drink alcohol and do not use contraception (birth control) when you have sex, you might get pregnant and expose your baby to alcohol before you know you are pregnant.

What if I drank before I knew I was pregnant?

Make sure you get regular prenatal checkups. Tell your health care provider you had been drinking and ask for advice. Remember, it is never too late to stop drinking. Brain growth takes place throughout pregnancy, the sooner you stop drinking the safer it will be for you and your baby. If you are unable to stop drinking, talk to your health care provider. Resources are available to help you.

If I drank when I was pregnant does that mean my baby will have an FASD?

If you drank any amount of alcohol while you were pregnant, talk with your child's health care provider as soon as possible and share your concerns. You may not know right away if your child has been affected. FASDs include a range of physical and intellectual disabilities that are not always easy to identify when a child is a newborn. Some of these effects may not be known until your child is in school. There is no cure for FASDs. However, identifying and intervening with children with these conditions as early as possible can help them to reach their full potential.

THE BEST CHOICE IS NOT TO DRINK ALCOHOL AT ALL WHEN YOU ARE PREGNANT OR TRYING TO GET PREGNANT.

PREGNANCY AND ALCOHOL DO NOT MIX.

AN ALCOHOL-FREE PREGNANCY IS THE BEST CHOICE FOR YOUR BABY.

Adapted from www.cdc.gov/fasd



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