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Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

Family Health Administration

Center For Maternal and Child Health

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About Alcohol and Pregnancy



**Maryland
Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders
(FASD)**

Take Good Care of Yourself...

Pregnancy is a time for taking good care of yourself to give your baby the best start. While you are pregnant, everything you eat and drink affects your baby. Drinking alcohol can cause health problems for your baby that will last a lifetime.

The more you drink, the greater the risk. When alcohol seriously affects a baby's health, it is called Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS). Babies born with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome may have:

- Low birth weight
- Abnormal facial features
- Damage to the heart, kidneys, eyes and ears
- Problems eating and sleeping.

As children born with FASD get older, more problems can show up. These include:

- Depression
- Difficulties learning in school
- Difficulty paying attention
- Trouble with the law
- Drug or alcohol problems
- Trouble getting along with others
- Difficulty controlling their own behavior.

Questions and Answers about Alcohol Use During Pregnancy

How much alcohol will harm my unborn child?

No amount of alcohol is safe. Doctors do not know how much alcohol it takes to harm an unborn baby. So the safest choice is not to drink any alcohol while you are pregnant or trying to get pregnant.

Are some types of alcohol less harmful?

A beer, a glass of wine, a wine cooler, a mixed drink, and a shot of liquor all have about the same amount of alcohol. They are equally harmful to your growing baby.

Is there a safe time to drink during pregnancy?

No. Alcohol crosses from the mother's blood into the baby's blood. That means anytime a pregnant woman drinks, her unborn baby drinks. Alcohol can cause problems at any stage of pregnancy.

What if I had a couple of drinks before I knew I was pregnant?

Having a small amount of alcohol before you knew you were pregnant is not likely to harm your baby. But your chances of having a healthy baby are greatly increased if you stop drinking right away.

Do you have to drink a lot to have a baby with FAS? No.

You don't have to be an alcoholic or drink every day to have a baby with FAS. Any woman who drinks alcohol during pregnancy can cause harm to her unborn child.

What if I can't stop drinking?

If it's hard to stop drinking, you may need help or support. There are programs that can help you stop drinking. Your doctor or nurse can help you find a program. If you want more information, check your local phone book for Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), or visit their Web site at: www.aa.org



For more information...

Maryland
Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Coalition
www.FASDMD.org

National
Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome
www.NOFAS.org