

DRINKING AND YOUR PREGNANCY

When you are pregnant, your baby grows inside you. What you eat and drink while you are pregnant affects your baby. If you drink alcohol, it can hurt your baby's growth. As a result your baby may have physical and behavioral problems that can last for the rest of his or her life. Children born with the most serious problems caused by alcohol have fetal alcohol syndrome.

1. Can I drink alcohol if I am pregnant?

No. Do not drink alcohol when you are pregnant. Why? Because when you drink alcohol, so does your baby. Think about it. Everything you drink, your baby also drinks.

2. Is any kind of alcohol safe to drink during pregnancy?

No. Drinking any kind of alcohol when you are pregnant can hurt your baby. Alcoholic drinks are beer, wine, wine coolers, liquor or mixed drinks. A glass of wine, a can of beer and a mixed drink all have about the same amount of alcohol.

3. What if I drank during my last pregnancy and my baby was fine?

Every pregnancy is different. Drinking alcohol may hurt one baby more than another. You could have one child who is born healthy, and another child who is born with problems.

4. Will these problems go away?

No. Many problems may last for a child's whole life. People with severe problems may not be able to take care of themselves as adults. They may never be able to work.

5. What if I am pregnant and have been drinking?

If you drank alcohol before you knew you were pregnant, stop drinking now. You will feel better, and your baby will have a better chance to be born healthy. If you want to get pregnant, do not drink alcohol. You may not know you are pregnant right away. Alcohol can hurt a baby even when you are only one or two months pregnant.

6. How can I stop drinking?

There are many ways to help yourself stop drinking. You do not have to drink when other people drink. If someone gives you a drink, it is OK to say no. Stay away from people or places that make you drink. Do not keep alcohol at home.

If you cannot stop drinking, **GET HELP**. You may have a disease called **alcoholism**. There are programs that can help you stop drinking. They are called alcohol treatment programs. Your doctor or nurse can find a program to help you. Even if you have been through a treatment program before, try it again. There are programs just for women.

Always discuss with your treating physician the preventive health care most appropriate for your needs and clinical condition. Adapted from National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, National Institutes of Health, NIH Publication No. 96-4101.



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