

Alcohol and Pregnancy



If you drink alcohol during pregnancy, your baby may be at risk of lifelong birth defects.

Moderate Drinking: What's the Risk?

There is no safe amount or type of alcohol use during pregnancy. Even moderate drinking (one drink a day) can cause lifelong problems for your baby. These problems may be less obvious than those caused by heavy drinking. They may include problems with

- coordination
- behavior
- attention
- learning
- understanding consequences

Heavy Drinking: What's the Risk?

Heavy drinking is having more than three drinks per occasion or more than seven drinks per week. The most severe result of heavy drinking during pregnancy is called fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS). FAS can cause serious birth defects for your baby, including

- problems with brain development
- lower-than-average height and weight
- smaller-than-normal head size
- abnormal facial features

Did You Know?

- No drinks are safe. One beer, one shot of liquor, one mixed drink, and one glass of wine all contain about the same amount of alcohol.
- If you are trying to get pregnant, you should not drink alcohol.
- Didn't know you were pregnant? While no amount or type of alcohol is safe during pregnancy, serious harm is unlikely if you drank before you knew you were pregnant. The most important thing is to stop drinking alcohol when you find out you are pregnant.

Alcohol-related birth defects are completely preventable. Do not drink alcohol during pregnancy.



If it is hard for you to stop drinking, talk with your obstetrician–gynecologist (ob-gyn) about getting help. You can also visit the Alcoholics Anonymous website at www.aa.org or call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s treatment referral line at 800-662-HELP (4357).

During your first prenatal visit, or at any time throughout your pregnancy, your ob-gyn can offer advice about avoiding alcohol while pregnant. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists believes that pregnant people who are dependent on alcohol should receive counseling and medical support to help them stop drinking.

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