



Pregnant?

Did you know
you could hurt
your baby if you
drink alcohol?

How can I hurt my baby by drinking alcohol?

If you drink when you're pregnant, your baby drinks too. Alcohol passes right from your body to your baby's body. The alcohol can hurt your baby even before you feel its effects. And it stays in your baby longer than in you.

Alcohol can damage a growing baby's brain, organs and body. This damage can affect how your baby thinks, acts, looks and learns as a child and as an adult.

What drinks can hurt?

Any drink with alcohol can hurt your baby. Too many people think only "hard liquor" like rum, vodka, or whiskey can hurt your baby. They're wrong! Any drink with alcohol in it can hurt your baby. Coolers, cider, wine, beer and liqueurs all have the same kind of alcohol as "hard liquor".

Cooking wine, mouthwash, cleaning products, and other liquids also have alcohol in them but were never meant to drink. And, if you drink them, they can hurt your baby too.

Exactly how many drinks will hurt?

Alcohol hurts a body most when it is growing. Your baby grows inside you the whole time you are pregnant, so drinking at any time could hurt your baby. No one has found an amount of alcohol that is safe to drink when you are pregnant. Of course, the risk of damage increases the more you drink. So your safest choice is not to drink at all.

What are FAS and other alcohol related effects?

FAS stands for Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. Doctors give this name to a specific group of serious problems a child has when a mother drank heavily while pregnant.

What happens to babies and children born with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome?

- Their brain is damaged forever so they have trouble following simple instructions or remembering things
- They're small and don't grow normally
- Their faces look different, such as small eyes and thin lips
- They're often colicky babies and hyper active children
- They might have trouble seeing, hearing or speaking
- They might have heart or kidney trouble

Here's what happens when they get older:

- They often have trouble controlling how they act and get along with other people
- They have trouble paying attention and learning at school
- They struggle with depression and may have drug and alcohol problems
- They have trouble holding a job
- They often get into trouble with the law

Will these problems go away?

No. They will last the child's whole life.

But I drank last time I was pregnant and my baby was fine.

Alcohol damage doesn't always show up before the child goes to school. And every pregnancy and every baby is different. Alcohol can hurt one baby more than another. It's a fact that if you drink when you are pregnant you take a risk of causing serious damage to your baby.

So what can I do?

To be completely safe, never drink when you're pregnant or planning to get pregnant. Ask your friends and family to not serve you alcohol while you are pregnant. If you need help not to drink, make sure you ask. It's never too late to quit! Your friends and family can help, or ask for help at your nearest health or treatment centre.

When you are pregnant, no alcohol is best.

FAS is 100% preventable.

More information on FAS is available by calling the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse's toll-free information centre at 1-800-559-4514.