

HEALTH & FITNESS

Drinking – even moderately – during pregnancy increases the risk of having a child with serious birth defects

Alcohol and pregnancy don't mix. Any woman who drinks alcohol during her pregnancy risks having a baby with serious birth defects.

That's because every time a pregnant woman has a drink, her unborn child is also forced to have a drink. And no amount of alcohol is safe for an unborn child.

This means that it's not just the babies of alcoholic women who are at risk. Any pregnant woman who drinks, even moderately, is taking a very serious chance.

And pregnant women shouldn't think that it's okay to drink once in a while instead of regularly. The fact is that binge drinking is more harmful because the unborn child is forced to absorb a great deal of alcohol all at once.

There's nothing new about all this.

Throughout recorded history there have been

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stories of babies affected by their mother's drinking.

Since 1973, though, the effects of drinking through pregnancy have been

described as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.

At their worst, these effects can be very serious.

Each affected child will be different but most FAS babies are born small and remain smaller than other children in their age group throughout the growth years.

FAS children have smaller heads than other children and they are slower learning to walk and talk. Later, they must cope with learning difficulties.


Because of the brain damage they have suffered, they can't control a lot of their behaviour and do not learn acceptable behaviour during everyday life.

Registered nurses say the riskiest time for FAS occurs during the period from the first week to the 10th week of pregnancy when many women may not realize they are pregnant.

That's because damage to the brain can occur at any time when a woman is pregnant.


During pregnancy, many women decide to break unhealthy habits for the sake of their unborn children.

If you think this might be difficult for you to do – or that you might need help to change your habits – see a registered nurse, doctor, alcohol or drug counselor.



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