



Maryland Department of Health

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**Brought to You by**

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MDH-FHA

Center For Maternal and Child Health

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# About Alcohol and Pregnancy



**Maryland Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Coalition**

## *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 Fetal Alcohol Syndrome 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 and controlling their 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, too. 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.

### **Don't you have to drink a lot to have a baby with FAS?**

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](http://www.aa.org)

**For more information...**

**Maryland Fetal Alcohol  
Spectrum Disorders Coalition**

[www.FASDMD.org](http://www.FASDMD.org)