



Alcohol During Pregnancy

EXTENSION

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Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Fact Sheets
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extension.okstate.edu

When you drink wine, beer, liquor or any type of alcohol during pregnancy, so does your unborn baby. No amount of alcohol is safe to drink - even moderate drinking during the first or second month of pregnancy can harm your baby. Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause many lifelong health problems for your baby. Your baby's brain and body are still growing during pregnancy and can be negatively affected by alcohol. Your baby could be born with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS).

Lifelong health problems for baby:

- Stillbirth
- Miscarriage
- Premature birth
- Low body weight
- Poor memory and attention
- Learning disabilities
- Speech delays
- Intellectual delays
- Sleep problems
- Vision or hearing loss
- Heart or kidney problems

What should you do?

Birth defects related to alcohol happen early in pregnancy, usually before you know you are pregnant. STOP drinking as soon as you think you may be pregnant. The best plan is to quit drinking before trying to get pregnant.

If you drank alcohol before pregnancy, think about what time of day or in what places you usually drank alcohol. While you are pregnant, make sure to plan ahead for those times - drink another fun drink that has no alcohol.

For example, have a virgin margarita, sparkling water, or fruit slush. You can add a straw, umbrella, or use your favorite glass to make it more enjoyable.

If you can, stay away from nightclubs, bars, or other parties where alcohol will be served. Keep alcohol out of your home and ask people in your house to help support you.

Just Say No!

Even if you avoid nightclubs and bars, you may still go places where people will offer you a drink. If someone asks you if you want a drink, or if you start to feel pressured to drink by others, you can say:

- No thanks, I am driving.
- No thanks, I want to stay in control.
- No thanks, what else do you have to drink?
- No thanks, I want to have a healthy pregnancy.
- No thanks, I do not want to hurt my baby.

No matter how you say it, the important thing is to promise yourself and your unborn baby that you will not drink any alcohol during your pregnancy.

When you can't say no

If you cannot stop drinking you may be addicted to alcohol.

Signs and symptoms of alcohol dependence include:

- Craving
- Loss of control
- Dependence
- Tolerance

Talk with your doctor. Call the County Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse where counselors can help you. You can also get help from Alcoholics Anonymous, a support group. Why take chances with the health of your baby? It's a decision that will last a lifetime.

The Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service

WE ARE OKLAHOMA

The Cooperative Extension Service is the largest, most successful informal educational organization in the world. It is a nationwide system funded and guided by a partnership of federal, state, and local governments that delivers information to help people help themselves through the land-grant university system.

Extension carries out programs in the broad categories of agriculture, natural resources and environment; family and consumer sciences; 4-H and other youth; and community resource development. Extension staff members live and work among the people they serve to help stimulate and educate Americans to plan ahead and cope with their problems.

Some characteristics of the Cooperative Extension system are:

- The federal, state, and local governments cooperatively share in its financial support and program direction.
- It is administered by the land-grant university as designated by the state legislature through an Extension director.
- Extension programs are nonpolitical, objective, and research-based information.
- It provides practical, problem-oriented education for people of all ages. It is designated to take the knowledge of the university to those persons who do not or cannot participate in the formal classroom instruction of the university.
- It utilizes research from university, government, and other sources to help people make their own decisions.
- More than a million volunteers help multiply the impact of the Extension professional staff.
- It dispenses no funds to the public.
- It is not a regulatory agency, but it does inform people of regulations and of their options in meeting them.
- Local programs are developed and carried out in full recognition of national problems and goals.
- The Extension staff educates people through personal contacts, meetings, demonstrations, and the mass media.
- Extension has the built-in flexibility to adjust its programs and subject matter to meet new needs. Activities shift from year to year as citizen groups and Extension workers close to the problems advise changes.

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