

# Busting the Myths About Drinking

## During Pregnancy



Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD).<sup>1</sup> FASD refers to a range of effects including physical, behavioral, and intellectual disabilities. Because there is no known amount of alcohol that can be considered safe during pregnancy, it is advised by all major medical associations, including the Centers for Disease Control<sup>2</sup>, the American Academy of Pediatrics<sup>3</sup>, and the U.S. Surgeon General<sup>4</sup>, that if a person is pregnant or could become pregnant, they should abstain from drinking alcohol. Despite this unwavering support from major medical associations, there are still many myths surrounding alcohol use during pregnancy.

MYTH	FACT
Wine is a safe choice during pregnancy, especially if it's only a few glasses here and there.	All types of alcohol – including wine, beer, hard cider, wine coolers, and hard liquor – contain chemicals known as teratogens that are harmful to fetal development. <sup>5</sup> The safest choice is not to drink any type of alcohol during pregnancy.
Children outgrow any issues caused by prenatal alcohol exposure.	Many of the effects of prenatal alcohol exposure cannot be cured and have lifelong implications. This includes permanent birth defects, brain injury, and/or disabilities. <sup>6-8</sup> Although FASD cannot be cured, research suggests that early intervention and treatment can improve a child's development and overall quality of life. <sup>9</sup>
FASD is only common in certain communities.	1 in 9 women drink alcohol at some point during their pregnancy <sup>10</sup> , and as many as 1 in 20 children in the United States have an FASD. <sup>11</sup> FASD affects people from all ethnicities and all income levels. <sup>12</sup>
It's safe to drink alcohol towards the end of the pregnancy.	The fetus develops at a rapid rate throughout the entire pregnancy. <sup>13</sup> Most importantly, the brain is always developing, even after the baby is born. <sup>14</sup> Because of this, the safest choice is to not drink any alcohol throughout the entire pregnancy, including the third trimester.
People who drink during pregnancy don't care about their baby.	Prenatal alcohol exposure is a complex public health issue, and many factors may lead to an alcohol-exposed pregnancy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Drinking alcohol before a pregnancy was known.</li><li>• Unaware of or underestimated the risks associated with prenatal alcohol exposure.</li><li>• Inaccurate information about the risks associated with prenatal alcohol exposure given by a healthcare provider.</li><li>• Familiarity with another person who drank during pregnancy and their child has not been diagnosed with an FASD.</li><li>• Having an alcohol use disorder.</li><li>• Drinking alcohol is a socially acceptable norm.</li></ul>

### Sources:

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