

Busting the Myths about Drinking During Pregnancy

Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause birth defects, brain injury, and fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD). There is no known amount of alcohol that can be considered safe during pregnancy. All major health groups advise that if a person is pregnant or may become pregnant, they should abstain from alcohol.

There are many myths surrounding alcohol use during pregnancy.

MYTH

Wine is safe to drink during pregnancy, especially if it's just one or two glasses here and there.

FACT

All types of alcohol contain chemicals known as teratogens that are harmful to the embryo or fetus. Drinking any type of alcohol can impact fetal development. The safest choice is to not drink any alcohol during the entire pregnancy.

MYTH

FASD is only common in certain communities.

FACT

In the United States, 1 in 9 pregnancies are exposed to alcohol. As many as 1 in 20 children have an FASD. FASD affects people from all races, all ethnicities and all income levels.

MYTH

It's safe to drink alcohol towards the end of the pregnancy.

FACT

The fetus' brain develops throughout the entire pregnancy. Drinking alcohol at any point during pregnancy can cause permanent brain injury. The safest choice is to abstain from alcohol throughout the entire pregnancy.

MYTH

Children outgrow any issues caused by drinking during pregnancy.

FACT

Drinking during pregnancy changes how the child's brain develops. These changes to the brain are lifelong. There is no cure for FASD. However, having access to early intervention and supports can help people with FASD be happier, healthier and more successful.

MYTH

Women in Europe drink while pregnant without issue.

FACT

Some countries in Europe have very high rates of alcohol use during pregnancy. Because of this, 4 of the 5 countries with the highest rates of fetal alcohol syndrome are located in Europe. These countries are Croatia, Ireland, Italy, and Belarus.

MYTH

People who drink during pregnancy don't care about their baby.

FACT

Many things may lead to an alcohol-exposed pregnancy:

- Not knowing they're pregnant
- Not knowing the risks
- Being given incorrect information
- Knowing someone who drank during pregnancy whose child has not been diagnosed with an FASD
- Being part of a community where drinking is the norm
- Having an alcohol use disorder

Everyone plays a role in preventing FASD:

- If you can become pregnant, talk with your care provider about preventing an alcohol exposed pregnancy.
- If you are a health care provider, take every opportunity to have conversations with patients about alcohol use before and during pregnancy.
- Become an advocate for change as it relates to alcohol policies in your community and state.
- Learn more about FASD and how you can support those impacted by this disorder at proofalliance.org.

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