

How Much Alcohol is Safe During Pregnancy

There is a lot of untrue information out there about drinking during pregnancy. You might hear different things from your friends, the news, and your doctor. Proof Alliance is here to set the record straight: there is no known safe amount of alcohol during pregnancy.

What are the facts?

The harmful effects of drinking during pregnancy have been shared by scientists for more than 40 years.¹ Binge drinking has been found to be particularly harmful.^{2,3} However, even drinking small amounts can affect the fetus.^{4,5,6,7} Drinking during pregnancy can cause fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD). FASD includes many different effects:^{8,9,10}

- Hyperactive behavior¹¹
- Impulsive behavior¹²
- Poor judgment skills¹³
- Poor social skills¹⁴
- Memory issues¹⁵
- Difficulty paying attention¹⁶
- Being sensitive to light, touch, or sound¹⁷
- Hearing or vision problems^{18,19}
- Poor coordination²⁰
- Difficulty in school²¹

All major health groups say that no amount of alcohol can be considered safe during pregnancy. These health groups include:

- World Health Organization²²
- Centers for Disease Control (CDC)²³
- American Academy of Pediatrics²⁴
- American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG)²⁵
- U.S. Surgeon General²⁶

What about articles that say a little bit is okay?

Scientists have not been able to find a safe level of alcohol during pregnancy. If an article claims otherwise, they are not sharing all the facts. Even when there is no binge drinking, alcohol use during pregnancy can affect brain development.²⁷ Drinking smaller amounts of alcohol during pregnancy can also cause low birth weight and preterm birth.^{28,29}

Is any amount of alcohol safe during pregnancy?

Not every person who drinks alcohol during pregnancy will have a child with FASD. However, scientists are not able to find a safe level of alcohol during pregnancy. There are many things that affect how alcohol impacts the fetus. The risk is different for each woman and each pregnancy. Even a small amount of alcohol can be dangerous depending on a wide range of factors.³⁰

These factors include:

- Genetics³¹
- Mother's diet³²
- Mother's age³³
- Mother's tobacco use³⁴
- Mother's substance use³⁵

Research has found that even identical twins with the same amount of alcohol exposure can have very different outcomes and effects.³⁶ There is no way to tell which fetuses are more at risk.

Because of this, and because even small amounts of alcohol have been found to affect the fetus, Proof Alliance continues to share the message that there is no known safe amount of alcohol during pregnancy.

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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