

The Importance of Planned Pregnancies

An unintended pregnancy is a pregnancy that is unplanned or unwanted at the time of conception.¹ In the United States, nearly half (45%) of all pregnancies are unintended.² This number is even higher for teens: 75% of pregnancies to people under the age of 20 are unintended.³

Unintended pregnancy is a serious public health issue⁴ that can lead to:^{5, 6, 7}

- delayed prenatal care
- less prenatal care visits
- depression and anxiety
- increased risk of miscarriage and low birth weight

Link to FASD

More than half (54%) of women drink alcohol.⁸ Most quit drinking when they find out they are pregnant. However, many pregnancies are unplanned. Most people do not find out they are pregnant until 4 weeks or more into the pregnancy.⁹ They may drink alcohol during that time without knowing they are pregnant. This exposure to alcohol can affect the fetus. Drinking during pregnancy can cause fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD). FASD includes birth defects, brain injury and disabilities.^{10, 11} The only way to prevent FASD is by not drinking any alcohol throughout pregnancy. When people plan their pregnancies, they are less likely to drink alcohol while pregnant. It is important that everyone has the right tools and information to plan their pregnancies.

Preventing Unplanned Pregnancy

There are different safe and effective forms of birth control that can help prevent pregnancy.¹² Using birth control regularly and correctly lowers the risk of unplanned pregnancy. Birth control options like intrauterine devices (IUDs) and implants are some of the most effective ways to prevent pregnancy. After being inserted by a doctor, an IUD or implant lasts for at least one year. Some IUDs can be used for up to 5 years. IUDs and implants are more than 99% effective at preventing pregnancy.¹³ They can be especially helpful for people who do not want to have to remember to take a pill every day. You can learn more about different birth control options on the CDC website.¹⁴ Your doctor can help you decide which option is best for you.

By preventing unintended pregnancy, we can also prevent FASD.



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.

Sources:

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