ALCOHOL DON'T AND MIX PREGNANCY MIX

If you're pregnant, or trying to become pregnant, and wondering if it's okay to include in the occasional small glass of wine or to enjoy a little champagne on New Year's Eve, the information and advice you receive may be confusing. The science can be complicated! Here's what the most up-to-date science tells us about the effects of drinking alcohol during pregnancy:

- 1 It is safest not to drink alcohol when pregnant. Although the science cannot tell us an exact safe or unsafe amount of alcohol during pregnancy, we do know that alcohol impacts fetal brain development.
- 2 Although the research is not conclusive, studies show that even small amounts of alcohol can affect the fetus.
- 3 There is no safe time to consume alcohol, because fetal brain development occurs throughout pregnancy.
- The fetus cannot metabolize alcohol very well and it concentrates in the amniotic fluid, so it is exposed to a higher concentration of alcohol for a longer time than the mother. The fetus also drinks amniotic fluid!
- 5 The specific **effects of alcohol on the fetus can vary**, even among those with similar levels of exposure no two mother-fetus pairs are the same.
- Drinking alcohol during pregnancy may also change the mother's DNA and genes which, when passed onto the developing fetus (and future grandchildren), may increase their risk of health issues later in life.
- Exposure to alcohol during pregnancy can lead to life-long consequences, including physical health problems, behavioural difficulties and learning disabilities, described as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).
- 8 Individuals with FASD are more at risk for substance use, mental health issues, having trouble in school and with the law. Individuals with FASD can be successful with support, but often find everyday tasks difficult.
- 9 As well as risk of FASD, drinking alcohol during pregnancy increases the risk of miscarriage, stillbirth, premature birth and low birth weight.
- 10 If you are having unprotected sex and you are drinking, take regular pregnancy tests. If you find out you are pregnant, it is best to stop drinking alcohol and seek prenatal care. Choose a mocktail or a non-alcoholic drink if you are trying to conceive; alcohol can affect fertility.
- 11 Risks from drinking alcohol in pregnancy apply to all women, no matter your income, ethnicity, age or location.

If you have any questions about alcohol and pregnancy, or about FASD, please talk to your health care provider.

For more information about substance use during pregnancy, visit PregnancyInfo.ca

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