

## *FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDERS (FASDs)*

### **Play it Smart, Alcohol and Pregnancy Don't Mix**

NOFAS joins the United States Surgeon General in advising women to abstain from alcohol during pregnancy due to the risk of birth defects. As women consider the risk—often for the first time when they are already pregnant—it's not uncommon to hear mixed messages. Below, NOFAS provides a personal perspective, the latest recommendations, and the science-based facts about the risk of drinking alcohol during pregnancy.

If you have just found out you are pregnant and you have been drinking alcohol, stop drinking now and talk with your doctor. Any time during pregnancy that you stop drinking you increase the chance that your baby will not be affected by alcohol.

If you are finding it difficult to stop drinking, help is available. Visit your doctor to talk about your drinking, or find a professional in your area at the [Substance Abuse and Treatment Facility Locator](#). You can also contact NOFAS by [email](#) or at (800) 66-NOFAS.

### **Alcohol and Pregnancy: A Personal Perspective**

"Every other week there seems to be another article in the media suggesting that "moderate" alcohol use is safe while pregnant. It's important to understand that we all have a different view of what moderation is, and that it is very easy to underestimate the amount of alcohol we actually consume. I drank while I was pregnant, all five times. I had no idea that drinking on the weekends would harm my children. Today, I have a 37 year old that plays with baby dolls; she has Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and intellectual disability. I have another daughter that suffers with chronic migraines and a host of other health problems. My last two children both died before they were three months old. There is not a day that goes by that I do not regret the fact that I drank while pregnant. I would not wish that on another mother. I love women—they are all my sisters—and I want them to know it is not safe to drink any alcohol while pregnant. Don't risk it, wait, there'll be plenty of time to celebrate and consume alcohol, after the baby is born!"

Kathleen Tavenner Mitchell  
Vice President and International Spokesperson  
National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

### **United States Surgeon General Advisory**

The most comprehensive review of alcohol and pregnancy research to date has been conducted by the Office of the Surgeon General within the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health in the Office of the Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Surgeon General first advised women to abstain from alcohol during pregnancy in 1981, and issued a new advisory in 2005.

The [advisory](#) states in part, "Based on the current, best science available we now know the following:

- No amount of alcohol consumption can be considered safe during pregnancy;
- Alcohol can damage the embryo or fetus at any stage of pregnancy;
- Damage can occur in the earliest weeks of pregnancy, even before a woman knows she is pregnant;
- The cognitive effects and behavioral problems resulting from prenatal alcohol exposure are lifelong."

- “For these reasons:
- A pregnant woman should not drink alcohol during pregnancy;
- A pregnant woman who has already consumed alcohol during pregnancy should stop in order to minimize further risk;
- A woman who is considering becoming pregnant should abstain from alcohol.”

About half of all pregnancies are unplanned. As a result, many women consume alcohol without knowing that they are pregnant. The Surgeon General’s advisory also suggests that women of childbearing age should consult their physician about how best to reduce the risk of prenatal alcohol exposure.

### **Recommendations**

#### [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

*There is no known safe amount of alcohol to drink while pregnant. There is also no safe time during pregnancy to drink and no safe kind of alcohol.*

#### [National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism](#)

*No amount of alcohol is safe for pregnant women to drink.*

#### [American Academy of Pediatrics](#)

*The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends women who are pregnant or planning a pregnancy avoid drinking any alcohol.*

#### [American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists](#)

*ACOG reiterates its long-standing position that no amount of alcohol consumption can be considered safe during pregnancy.*

#### [March of Dimes](#)

*Drinking alcohol when you’re pregnant can be very harmful to your baby. It can cause your baby to have a range of lifelong health conditions.*

#### [National Arc](#)

*There is no absolute safe amount of alcohol that a woman can drink during pregnancy. Risk of FASD increase as the amount of alcohol consumed increases.*

#### [Baby Center](#)

*All public health officials in the United States recommend that pregnant women, as well as women who are trying to conceive, play it safe by steering clear of alcohol entirely.*