

Alcohol, Drugs and Your Pregnancy



When You Are Pregnant, Drinking or Doing Drugs Can Hurt Your Baby

When you are pregnant, your baby grows inside you. Everything you eat and drink while you are pregnant affects your baby. If you drink alcohol or take illicit drugs, it can hurt your baby's growth. Your baby may have physical and behavioral problems that can last for the rest of his or her life.

Children born with the most serious problems caused by alcohol have "fetal alcohol syndrome." Children born to mothers who use drugs may be born addicted to drugs themselves.

If You Drink Alcohol or Take Illicit Drugs While Pregnant, Your Baby May:

- Be born small.
- Have problems eating and sleeping.
- Have problems seeing and hearing.
- Have trouble following directions and learning how to do simple things.
- Have trouble paying attention and learning in school.
- Have trouble getting along with others and controlling their behavior.
- Need special teachers and schools.
- Need medical care all their lives.

Here Are Some Questions You May Have About Alcohol, Drugs, and Your Pregnancy

1. Can I drink alcohol or take illicit drugs if I am pregnant?

No. Do not drink alcohol or take illicit drugs when you are pregnant. Why? Because when you drink alcohol or take illicit drugs, so does your baby. Think about it. Everything you drink, the baby drinks. Every drug you take, your baby takes.

2. Is any kind of alcohol or illicit drug safe to drink or take during pregnancy?

No. Drinking any kind of alcohol or taking any kind of illicit drug when you are pregnant can hurt your baby. A glass of wine, a can of beer, and a mixed drink all have about the same amount of alcohol. You should never take any kind of drug without first asking your doctor and no amount of alcohol has been proved safe during pregnancy. This includes over-the-counter or prescription medication, as well as any illicit drugs.

3. What if I drank alcohol or took illicit drugs during my last pregnancy and the baby was fine?

Every pregnancy is different. Drinking alcohol or taking drugs may hurt one baby more than another. You could have one child that is born healthy, and another child that is born with problems.

4. Will these problems go away?

The long-term consequences are not known for every drug. Developmental difficulties and learning problems are a possibility. People with severe problems may not be able to take care of themselves as adults. They may never be able to work.

5. What if I am pregnant and have been drinking or taking drugs?



If you drank alcohol or used drugs before you knew you were pregnant, stop drinking or using drugs now. You will feel better and your baby will have a good chance to be born healthy. If you want to get pregnant, do not drink alcohol or take drugs. You may not know you are pregnant right away. Alcohol and drugs can hurt a baby even when you are only 1 or 2 months pregnant.

6. How can I stop drinking or taking drugs?

There are many ways to help yourself stop drinking or taking drugs. You do not have to drink or take drugs when other people do. If someone gives you a drink or offers you drugs, it is okay to say no. Stay away from people or places that make you want to drink or take drugs. Do not keep alcohol or drugs at home.

If you cannot stop drinking or taking drugs, there are programs that can help you stop. There are programs just for women that specialize in helping pregnant mothers stay clean. Even if you have been through a treatment program before, try it again. Contact a doctor, nurse, social worker, pastor, or clinic or program near you for more information. In Washington State, you can call the 24-Hour Alcohol/Drug Help Line (1-800-562-1240) for treatment information or referral.

For Help and Information in Washington State

24-Hour Alcohol/Drug Help Line
(800) 562-1240

Alcoholics Anonymous (King County)
(206) 587-2838
<http://seattleaa.org>

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Diagnostic & Prevention Network (FAS DPN)
University of Washington
(206) 685-9888
<http://depts.washington.edu/fasdpr/>

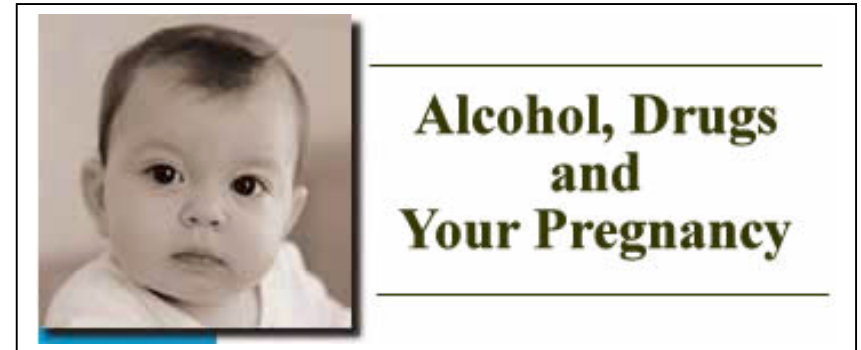
High-Risk Infant Follow-Up Clinic
(206) 685-1350
<http://depts.washington.edu/chdd/ucedd/CCS/CCSHighRisk.html>

Narcotics Anonymous (King County)
(206) 329-1618
<http://seattlena.org>

National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome
(800) 66-NOFAS
<http://www.nofas.org>

Parent-Child Assistance Program (P-CAP)
(Birth to 3 Program)
(206) 543-7155
http://depts.washington.edu/chdd/ucedd/CO/co_PCAP.html

Washington State Alcohol and Drug Clearinghouse
(206) 725-9696
<http://clearinghouse.adhl.org>



**How drinking or taking drugs can hurt
your baby and what you can do to get
help if you need it.**

Adapted from:

"Drinking and Your Pregnancy," NIH publication No. 96-4101 1996.
<http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/brochures.htm>

American Academy of Pediatrics, Committee on Substance Abuse.
"Drug-exposed infants." *Pediatrics* 1995; 96(2):364-367.