

# ALCOHOL & PREGNANCY:

## FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER

**Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD)** is a term that describes the effects alcohol can have on a baby when a mother drinks alcohol while pregnant. **FASD** causes **physical deformations, mental retardation, heart defects, and serious behavioral and learning problems.** FASD is the leading cause of mental retardation and is **100% preventable.**

### ALCOHOL AFFECTS UNBORN BABIES

When a woman drinks alcohol, the alcohol enters her blood and reaches the unborn baby (fetus) through the umbilical cord. Alcohol is toxic to a fetus. The fetus has a difficult time

processing alcohol. The fetus's blood alcohol content will be much higher and last longer than the mother's. The more the mother drinks, the more harm is done. When a pregnant woman drinks alcohol, her baby does too.



Each year around **50,000 BABIES** are born with **ALCOHOL-RELATED damage.**



### EFFECTS OF FASD

**FASD is a series of birth defects that last a lifetime.**

- Smaller growth of fetus and/or smaller size at birth
- Smaller size in childhood and adulthood
- Small head, small eyes, cleft palate, short nose, flattened forehead
- Mental retardation, learning, and developmental problems
- Speech and hearing problems
- Heart, liver, kidney and dental defects
- Skeletal defects such as fused bones

BRAIN OF A 6-WEEK-OLD BABY WITH FASD



BRAIN OF A 6-WEEK-OLD BABY



### FASD FACTS

- 30-45% of women who are heavy drinkers have children with severe FASD
- Heavy drinkers are **3 times** more likely to miscarry than non-drinkers.
- Risk of miscarriage is double for women who have **2-4 drinks a week.**
- **Two drinks** a week is associated with low birth weight.
- FASD costs the US an estimated **6 billion** each year and cost individuals at least 2 million over a lifetime.

**FASD is 100% PREVENTABLE!**  
**The only cause of FASD is PRENATAL EXPOSURE to alcohol.**

### FASD MYTHS

**MYTH:** "MY SISTER DRANK WHILE PREGNANT AND HER BABY WAS FINE."

**TRUTH:** Some fetuses are more easily hurt by alcohol than others. No one knows which will be most affected. The best choice is to stay away from alcohol when pregnant.

**MYTH:** "ONLY ALCOHOLIC MOTHERS HAVE BABIES WITH FASD."

**TRUTH:** Even light to medium amounts of drinking can increase the risk of defects or miscarriage.



**MYTH:** "I DON'T FEEL PREGNANT. I DON'T LOOK PREGNANT. THE BABY IS TOO SMALL TO BE AFFECTED BY ALCOHOL."

**TRUTH:** Some of the most serious damage to the fetus can happen within the first eight weeks of pregnancy — when you may not even know you're pregnant. If you think you're pregnant or are trying to get pregnant, stay away from alcohol.

### IF YOU'RE PREGNANT OR WANT TO BE...

- If pregnant, do not drink alcohol.
- Pregnant women who have already consumed alcohol should stop at once.
- If you are considering becoming pregnant, don't drink alcohol.
- There is no safe amount of alcohol to drink while pregnant.

**PREGNANT? PUT YOUR BABY FIRST: DON'T DRINK!**