

ALCOHOL USE DURING PREGNANCY



Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) is a well-known consequence of maternal alcohol intake during pregnancy described first in 1973. Although heavier drinking during pregnancy is associated with more severe consequences, there is NO safe level of maternal alcohol intake.

In extreme cases, prenatal alcohol exposure has been linked to both fetal death and SIDS.

The effects of alcohol on the developing fetus are varied, irreversible, and lifelong.

The immediate effects may be apparent at birth, including smaller size in general as well as a small head due to an underdeveloped and small brain.

There are classic facial features associated with prenatal alcohol intake, but other facial abnormalities are possible such as a small jaw and cleft palate.

Many organ systems other than the brain may be affected. These include the heart/vessels, kidneys, muscles, bones, vision, and hearing.

Later in life, children exposed to alcohol may also have other issues with their development and learning problems.

Problems with school are common due to a higher risk of ADHD as well as learning disabilities.

Other issues include problems with memory skills,



problem-solving, abstract reasoning, hearing comprehension, and language use.

School disruptions are common and are a result of an increase of problems with behavior, self-regulation, impulse control, poor social interaction skills, adaptive skills, and difficulties with peer relationships.

As they grow, these children and later adults may have psychiatric, emotional, and behavioral problems. These may include mental health issues such as anxiety and depression, ADHD, substance use, addiction and suicide.

Later in life, interaction with the legal system and/or under- or unemployment are possible due a failure to achieve age-appropriate socialization and communication skills.

Breastfeeding

Breast milk alcohol concentrations closely parallel blood alcohol concentrations, with highest levels in milk occurring 30 to 60 minutes after consuming alcohol.

This might result in a risk for injury for the mom or the infant due to decreased awareness, sedation, and/or balance and coordination problems.

Due to the known risks, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology recommend that pregnant and breastfeeding women completely abstain from alcohol.

CITATIONS:

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