

Alcohol, Smoking, and Caffeine During Pregnancy

Pregnant women are strongly urged **not to drink alcohol or smoke** during pregnancy. These substances can cause many complications during pregnancy, have damaging effects on developing fetuses and may contribute to other medical problems as the child grows.

When a pregnant woman drinks alcohol, it travels through her bloodstream and into the fetus. That means that when mom has a glass of wine, her baby has a glass of wine too. In addition, drinking alcohol can lead you to eat less, thus losing sources of nutrients.

Alcohol consumption during pregnancy can lead to **Fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS)**. FAS includes mental and physical birth defects and growth problems associated with the mother's high levels of alcohol use during pregnancy.

A milder syndrome called Fetal alcohol effect (FAE) is characterized by behavioral problems and developmental delays.

The risk of harm from drinking alcohol during pregnancy is closely related. The more you drink, the higher the risk of problems. Since there is no amount of alcohol that is considered "safe," pregnant women and women trying to get pregnant should not drink alcohol at all.

The same rule should be followed for smoking. Smoking makes it harder to get pregnant, is dangerous to your baby during and after pregnancy, and makes it harder to recover from delivery. Smoking deprives your eggs, embryo, and fetus of oxygen. This can lead to accelerated ovarian aging, a higher risk of miscarriage, and low-birthweight babies. Once the child is born, there is a higher likelihood of her having developmental issues like mental and behavioral problems.

Caffeine can also affect your growing baby. Small amounts of caffeine during pregnancy are okay, but heavy doses are strongly discouraged. Caffeine, like alcohol, travels through your bloodstream to the placenta and can have a negative effect on your baby. Since caffeine is a stimulant it increases your heart rate and metabolism - both of which directly affect the baby. It is okay to have one or two cups of coffee, tea, or cola a week, but try to give them up completely if you can.