Alcohol and Pregnancy

What are the risks to my baby of drinking alcohol during pregnancy?
Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause miscarriage, stillbirth, and a range of physical, behavioral, and intellectual disabilities for the baby that can last a lifetime. These disabilities are known as fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs). Some of the health and other problems of people with FASDs include learning disabilities, hyperactivity, difficulty with attention, speech and language delays, low IQ, and poor reasoning (thinking) and judgment skills. People born with FASDs can also have problems with their organs, including the heart and kidneys. Babies with fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS), which is one of the FASDs, have a small head, weigh less than other babies, and have parts of their faces that look different than other babies.

What do I need to know about drinking alcohol during pregnancy?
- There is no known safe amount of alcohol you can drink during pregnancy or while trying to get pregnant.
- Too many women continue to drink during pregnancy. About 1 in 13 pregnant women in the United States drank alcohol in the past 30 days. About 1 in 71 pregnant women in the United States had 4 or more drinks at one time (binge drinking) in the past 30 days.
- FASDs are completely preventable if a woman does not drink alcohol during pregnancy. Why take the risk?

Is it okay to drink a little or at certain times during pregnancy?
There is no known safe amount of alcohol use during pregnancy or when you are trying to get pregnant. All drinks with alcohol can affect a baby’s growth and development and cause FASDs. A 5-ounce glass of red or white wine has the same amount of alcohol as a 12-ounce can of beer or a 1.5-ounce shot of straight liquor. All types of alcohol—even wine, wine coolers, and beer—can harm your developing baby. The chart below shows when your baby is developing different parts of its body that may be harmed by drinking alcohol.

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**FETAL DEVELOPMENT CHART**

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<th>PERIOD OF THE EMBRYO</th>
<th>PERIOD OF THE FETUS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Weeks 1-2</td>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Week 12</td>
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<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Weeks 20-36</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>Week 38</td>
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</tbody>
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- CNS: Central Nervous System
- Heart
- Eye
- Limbs
- Ear
- Palate
- External Genital
- Brain

Adapted from Moore. 1998 and the National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (NOFAS) 2009
Is it okay to drink alcohol if I am trying to get pregnant?
It is best to stop drinking alcohol when you start trying to get pregnant because many women become pregnant and do not know it right away. It may be up to 4 to 6 weeks before you know for sure that you are pregnant. This means you might be drinking and exposing your developing baby to alcohol without meaning to.

What can I do to help myself stop drinking alcohol?
Ask your health care provider for help. Together, you can develop a plan for you to quit drinking.

What can I say to people who offer me alcohol or expect me to drink?
- “No thanks, I’m pregnant and I’ll pass.”
- “I’ll have water.”
- Or just say, “No thanks,” and change the subject.

How can I stay social without drinking?
You can hang out with people who will help you not to drink alcohol. Ask them if they would not drink alcohol around you. You can avoid risky places and situations such as bars and clubs. At parties, stay away from the drink table. Stick with people who aren’t drinking.

What else can help me not drink alcohol?
- If you smoke, quit. Cigarettes increase your craving to drink and are dangerous for your developing baby.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Get some exercise: take a walk, dance, go for a swim.
- Keep stress away: take a long bath, meditate, or take some deep breaths.
- Be proud of yourself for doing all you can to have a healthy baby!

For More Information
The following organizations can provide you with more information about FASDs and alcohol use during pregnancy:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/fasd or call 800–CDC–INFO

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) FASD Center for Excellence
www.fasdcenter.samhsa.gov
If you are pregnant or trying to get pregnant and cannot stop drinking alcohol, the following organizations and resources can help:

National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (NOFAS)
www.nofas.org or call 800–66–NOFAS (66327)

Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator
www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov or call 800–622–HELP (4357)

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