

[IMAGE]

Not a Drop!

Alcohol use during pregnancy increases an infant's risk for premature birth and physical or mental retardation; at higher alcohol levels, fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) and even death may occur. In spite of growing public awareness about the harmful effects of drinking alcohol while pregnant, the number of expectant mothers who continue to drink may actually be rising.

Most previous studies on alcohol use during pregnancy have drawn data from high-risk, low-income clinics. However, a recent study on alcohol use during pregnancy analyzed over 1,100 pregnant women (18 years or older) from a wide variety of obstetrics clinics in Michigan. Participants completed brief questionnaires while waiting for prenatal care.

Alcohol use during pregnancy was reported by 15% of the women. The majority of these women reported very little alcohol consumption (over 85% claimed only one drink or less per week) - yet 6% of the women reported binge drinking during pregnancy, or having at least five drinks on one occasion while pregnant. These women were more likely to smoke and to be in the early stages of their pregnancy than other participants. Surprisingly, over half of the women who admitted drinking during pregnancy said their health care provider had talked to them about alcohol use during pregnancy.

Women in this study from *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research* may have been more honest than they would have been with their health care provider, since they were informed the results of this study would remain confidential. These statistics are frightening. If you are pregnant, don't drink even a single drop of alcohol during pregnancy, and don't hesitate to inform others of the dangers, either - many women are simply unaware of the risks of a drink or two. If you need help confronting the issue (or confronting someone else), don't be afraid to speak to your doctor.

Reference:

Flynn HA, Marcus SM, et al. Rates and correlates of alcohol use among pregnant women in obstetrics clinics. *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research* 2003;27(1), pp. 81-87.

For more information on prenatal health, head to <http://www.chiroweb.com/find/archives/women>.

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