

# Possible Effects of Alcohol and Other Drugs During Pregnancy

By Jennifer Faringer

September is Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Awareness month. Every mother hopes to deliver a healthy baby. While many women know that drinking during pregnancy can potentially cause harm, they may hesitate seeking treatment if they fear the stigma and discrimination often faced if use is admitted.

It is important that prenatal care include having an active conversation, as early in the pregnancy as possible, about the importance of eliminating the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs during pregnancy.

In one study published in the "Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research Journal," researchers found that women, when asked about their alcohol use, often under-reported both the amount and the frequency of use.

The study found that 20% reported drinking during special occasions, and 52% reported binge drinking the last time they consumed alcohol. When asked about the number of drinks consumed, they acknowledged four or more.

Screening tools most often used are more effective detecting heavy chronic drinking but are less effective in detecting moderate or binge drink-



ing episodes.

For that reason, both pregnant women and women intending to become pregnant are advised to abstain from alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use to ensure the safest, healthiest outcome for their pregnancy.

The table below illustrates impact of use during pregnancy that varies depending upon the drug. [Source: Institute for Health & Recovery,

2021]

"Of all the substances of abuse (including cocaine, heroin, and marijuana), alcohol produces by far the most serious neurobehavioral effects in the fetus," according to a report by the Institute of Medicine.

To ensure the health and safety of your child consider eliminating the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs during your pregnancy.

For further information and resources, visit the NCADD-RA's website at [www.ncadd-ra.org](http://www.ncadd-ra.org) or their Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/NCADDRA](http://www.facebook.com/NCADDRA).

*Jennifer Faringer is the director of DePaul's National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence-Rochester Area.*

## A Pregnant Woman Never Drinks Alone

If you're pregnant, don't drink.

If you drink, don't get pregnant.



### Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

is the leading known cause of preventable developmental disabilities.

**National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence**

—Rochester Area

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[ncadd-ra.org/resources/awareness-campaigns/fetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorder/](https://ncadd-ra.org/resources/awareness-campaigns/fetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorder/)