Myths and Truths About Alcohol Use During Pregnancy

Myth	*Truth*
1. It is safe to drink beer or wine during pregnancy but not hard alcohol	1. Beer, wine, margaritas, daiquiris, Mike's lemonade, and other "softer" beverages are as harmful to the developing fetus as gin, whiskey, vodka, bourbon, etc. They all contain pure alcohol!
2. As long as a woman stops drinking when she finds out she is pregnant, there will be no damage to the developing fetus.	2. The best time to stop drinking is before you become pregnant. If you plan on drinking, use birth control. Even during the first weeks of pregnancy the fetus is developing. Damage to the fetus can occur at any time during the pregnancy.
3. It is OK to drink a little in the 3rd trimester.	3. No time is safe. During each trimester the fetus is developing and growing the brain, body and organs. Alcohol can cause harm at any time.
4.Beer and other alcohol is not as dangerous as heroin, cocaine, methamphetamines, marijuana, etc.	4. Even though many substances can cause damage to the fetus, alcohol causes the most harmful neurobehavioral effects.
5. When women drink during their pregnancies there are always problems with the baby.	5. Every Pregnancy is different. Some babies are affected and some are not. Sometimes, disabilities may become more obvious as the child grows.
6. One or two drinks will not harm the developing fetus.	6. No amount of alcohol is safe for the developing fetus. Any amount of alcohol can cause brain damage and other difficulties.
7. A woman needs to be an alcoholic in order for her baby to have Fetal Alcohol Syndrome or Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders.	7. Any woman who drinks during pregnancy can harm the developing fetus. What damage is done can depend on the time of use, and the amount. For women, binge drinking is drinking 4 or more drinks on one occasion. Binge drinking can be very harmful to the developing fetus.
8. If a woman has Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders her child will also have FAS/FASD.	8. The only way for a child to have Fetal Alcohol Syndrome or Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders is if the mother drinks during pregnancy. This disability is lifelong.
9. The partner/husband's drinking can also cause FAS/FASD.	9. Although the father's drinking cannot cause fetal alcohol syndrome, research indicates that dad's drinking can cause growth restrictions and learning difficulties. Additionally, the partner should abstain during the pregnancy to be supportive of an alcohol free pregnancy.
10. It is OK for a woman to drink once she has delivered. Drinking beer helps increase breast milk production.	10. If you breastfeed, alcohol passes through the breast milk to the infant which can impact the developing brain. There is no evidence that beer or any other alcohol will increase milk production. In fact, alcohol disrupts the hormones that are involved in milk production.

Resources

If you would like more information about Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, please contact the **New Jersey Family Health Line at 1-800-328-3838.**

On the web go to www.beintheknownj.org.

For assistance in locating treatment programs or for additional information, contact the Perinatal Addictions Prevention Projects at your nearest Maternal and Child Health Consortia:

Partnership for Maternal and Child Health of Northern New Jersey 201-876-8900 Ext 228.

Central Jersey Family Health Consortium 732-937-5437 Ext 135

Southern New Jersey Perinatal Cooperative 856-675-5310