



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Avoiding Alcohol During Pregnancy

Alcohol Use Among Women of Childbearing Age — United States, 2006–2010

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[Announcer] *This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

If you're pregnant or might get pregnant, you can begin taking care of your child long before birth. Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can have permanent negative health effects on your developing child.

Claire Marchetta is a researcher with CDC's National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities. She's joining us today to discuss the importance of avoiding alcohol use during pregnancy. Welcome to the show, Claire.

[Ms. Marchetta] Thanks, Bob. I'm happy to be here.

[Dr. Gaynes] Claire, what kinds of problems can alcohol use during pregnancy cause for newborns?

[Ms. Marchetta] Well, drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause several problems, and these can include physical problems, such as delayed growth or problems with the heart, kidneys, or bones. And it can also lead to learning and behavior problems, such as lower IQ and hyperactivity. And collectively, these problems are known as fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, or FASDs.

[Dr. Gaynes] Are these conditions reversible or treatable?

[Ms. Marchetta] No Bob; unfortunately, they're not. The baby's brain is developing throughout pregnancy, so once brain damage occurs, it is permanent. However, there are interventions that can help the child live a more normal life. And the good news is that these types of problems are 100 percent preventable.

[Dr. Gaynes] So what is a safe level of alcohol consumption for pregnant women?

[Ms. Marchetta] Well, I want to be very clear and say that there is no known safe level of alcohol consumption during pregnancy.

[Dr. Gaynes] At what point before getting pregnant should a woman consider abstaining from alcohol use?

[Ms. Marchetta] Well Bob, an important thing to know is that half of all pregnancies are unplanned, so women who are trying to get pregnant or who might get pregnant, meaning those

who are not using birth control at all or not using birth control consistently or as directed by their doctor, should not drink. And this is because women could be pregnant for several weeks and not know, and so drinking any alcohol could be very dangerous to their child.

[Dr. Gaynes] Where can listeners get more information about alcohol consumption during pregnancy?

[Ms. Marchetta] Listeners can visit our website and that is at www.cdc.gov/fasd.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Claire. I've been talking today with CDC's Claire Marchetta about the importance of avoiding alcohol use during pregnancy.

Remember, there is *no* known safe level of alcohol consumption during pregnancy. If you're pregnant or might get pregnant, don't drink.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.