



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Don't Drink and Deliver

Alcohol Use Among Women of Childbearing Age — United States, 1991–2005

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[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

[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.

A mother's job doesn't begin *after* she gives birth to a baby. Healthy behaviors before and during pregnancy play a key role in the ultimate outcome of a pregnancy. One of the greatest dangers to an unborn child is alcohol.

Dr. Clark Denny is a health scientist with CDC's National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities. He's joining us today to discuss the importance of women abstaining from alcohol during pregnancy. Welcome to the show, Clark.

[Dr. Denny] Thank you for having me on.

[Dr. Gaynes] Clark, is alcohol consumption among pregnant women increasing or decreasing?

[Dr. Denny] We just completed a study looking over 15 years and we found that alcohol consumption among pregnant women was changing very little or basically staying the same. And this was surprising to us because we thought the message that you shouldn't drink while you're pregnant was getting out to women.

[Dr. Gaynes] Is drinking during pregnancy more common among any particular groups of women?

[Dr. Denny] Yes, it is. In our study, we found that the women that were most likely to drink while pregnant were older mothers, women who are more educated, women who are working, and single women. And this goes against the stereotype that some people have that women who will be drinking while they're pregnant are women who have less education or may not be working. And so it's important that this message about not drinking while you're pregnant is given to all women.

[Dr. Gaynes] Clark, what effects can alcohol have on child development?

[Dr. Denny] Alcohol has basically three negative effects on child development. The first and the most serious is that it affects learning and it affects behavior, and these are serious because they can last the entire life and often they are not noticed until the child starts attending school. The second negative effect of alcohol is that the child's growth may be affected so the child may have some growth deficiencies. And the third is that the child's face may not develop normally.

[Dr. Gaynes] Clark, how early in pregnancy can alcohol have an impact on a child's development?

[Dr. Denny] Alcohol can affect a child's development at conception. So it's important during pregnancy, not to drink at all. Women who can get pregnant, are pregnant, or are thinking of getting pregnant should not drink any alcohol at all.

[Dr. Gaynes] Clark, where can listeners get more information about the affects of alcohol on child development?

[Dr. Denny] A good place to get that information is at our website which is www.cdc.gov/fasd, which stands for 'Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders.' That's "fasd."

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Clark. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Clark Denny about the importance of women abstaining from alcohol during pregnancy.

Remember, there is no amount of alcohol that's safe to drink during pregnancy. So women who are pregnant, trying to get pregnant, or could become pregnant should avoid drinking altogether.

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, 24/7.