



# PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS SAY: IT IS SAFEST NOT TO DRINK DURING PREGNANCY.

## ALCOHOL & PREGNANCY

the straight up facts



Your doctor, best friend, mother, partner, and random strangers say .....

Advice is always changing. Everything in moderation is the best thing.

A little alcohol can't hurt, especially later in your pregnancy.

I read about a new study in the paper yesterday which said...

Back in the 1960s and 1970s, everyone drank. It wasn't a problem then....

I drank while I was pregnant and my kids are fine.

It's not good to deprive yourself. 1-2 drinks at a time is nothing to worry about.

### Here are the facts:

**Common name:** Alcohol  
**Scientific name:** Ethanol (C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>5</sub>OH)  
**Teratogen:** A big, scary word used to describe chemicals and environmental factors that can cause birth defects. Alcohol is a known teratogen. Drinking high levels of alcohol while pregnant causes clear harm to an unborn baby. Scientists believe many of these harms can result from drinking small amounts of alcohol, too (you know, like, on a continuum).

10.8%

Percentage of women who drank alcohol during pregnancy (after they knew they were pregnant)

1.0%

Percentage of people in the Canadian population affected by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder,\* the leading known cause of developmental disability

\* Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is the term used to describe the range of permanent physical, behavioral, and cognitive harms that can result from prenatal alcohol exposure.

\$14,342

Average annual costs per child diagnosed with FASD

62.3%

Percentage of women who drank alcohol before pregnancy

50.0%

Approximate number of unintended or unplanned pregnancies in Canada

(TRANSLATION: If you drink alcohol and are having sex, take a closer look at whether your birth control is doing what it's supposed to. If you're thinking about getting pregnant, it's safest to stop drinking right now. If you drank before you knew you were pregnant, don't panic - talk to your doctor to learn more.)

Drinking low amounts of alcohol, such as 1 to 2 drinks at a time, may cause harm to a fetus. Our current research methods might not be able to detect these effects for some time.

Drinking moderate to high amounts of alcohol at any time during pregnancy causes harm to a fetus and can increase a woman's risk of having a miscarriage.

Actual risk for an individual woman is influenced by things like genetics, nutritional health, other substance use, whether the fetus is male or female, and a whole bunch of other things.

Some women have a difficult time stopping drinking alcohol during pregnancy. Addiction can be complicated, but support and care are available.

#### Sources:

- ⇒ O'Leary CM and Bower C. (2011). Guidelines for pregnancy: What's an acceptable risk, and how is the evidence (finally) shaping up? Drug and Alcohol Review, early on-line access. DOI: 10.1111/j.1465-3362.2011.00331.x PMID: 21955332
- ⇒ Poole, N. (2008). Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Prevention: Canadian Perspectives. Ottawa, ON: Public Health Agency of Canada.
- ⇒ Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada. (2010). Alcohol Use and Pregnancy: Consensus Clinical Guidelines. Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology Canada, 32(8): S1-S32.
- ⇒ Walker, M., Al-Sahab, B., Islam, F., & Tamim, H. (2011). The epidemiology of alcohol utilization during pregnancy: an analysis of the Canadian Maternity Experiences Survey (MES). BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth, 11(1), 52. doi:10.1186/1471-2393-11-52

This infographic was created by the Canada FASD Network's Action Team on FASD Prevention from a Women's Health Determinants Perspective.

⇒ Website: [www.canfasd.ca](http://www.canfasd.ca) ⇒ Blog: [fasdprevention.wordpress.com](http://fasdprevention.wordpress.com)