



Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

It was once thought that the placenta would keep the fetus safe from anything the mother ate or drank. Doctors once believed that only a small amount of alcohol could reach the fetus. It is now known that the mother and fetus share the same blood alcohol levels. There's no known safe level of alcohol consumption during pregnancy. Whatever you put into your body could potentially harm your baby. Drinking alcoholic beverages while you're pregnant can cause physical and mental retardation in your baby. This is known as fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS).

Signs of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

Babies born to mothers who drink during pregnancy are at risk for birth defects including:

- low birth weight and stunted growth.
- heart and liver defects.
- permanent deformities of the head and face.
- hyperactivity and emotional problems.
- mental retardation.

Before Conception

If you're trying to become pregnant, avoid drinking. Even drinking during the first two months, before you may know you're pregnant, can cause mild retardation or emotional problems in your child. Alcohol is a toxic substance. It can enter your baby's body even during those quiet first few weeks of development.

What to Avoid

Any consumption of alcohol is harmful to the fetus. Substances to avoid include:

- beer, wine and wine coolers.
- distilled spirits and cocktails.
- brandied fruit and desserts.
- medications that contain alcohol, such as some cough or cold remedies.