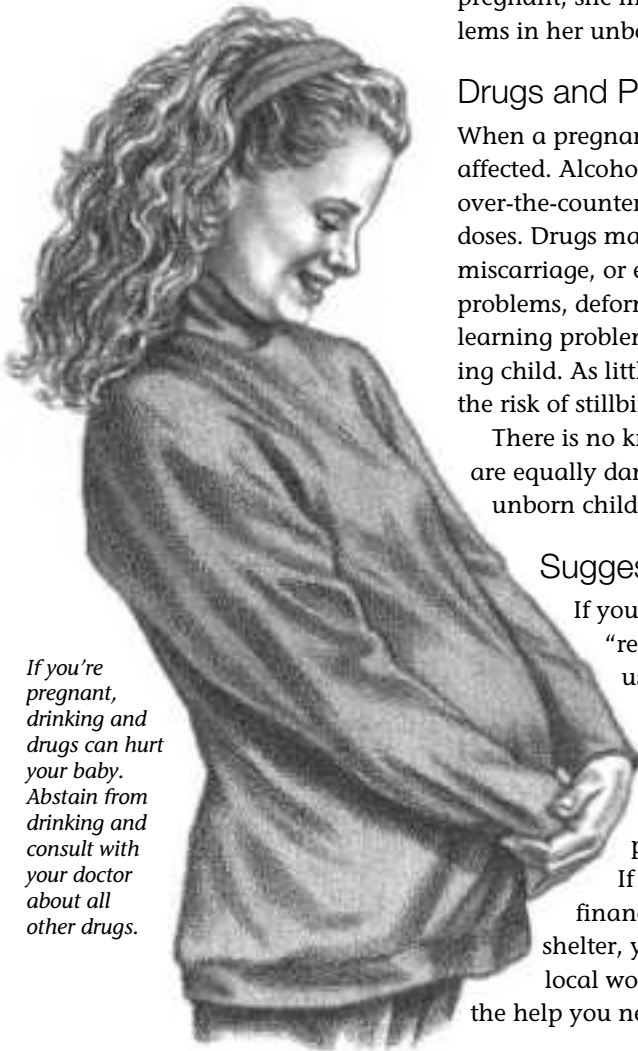




WOMEN

Drinking & Drugs



If you're pregnant, drinking and drugs can hurt your baby. Abstain from drinking and consult with your doctor about all other drugs.

Many people have trouble dealing with alcohol or other drugs. Women can be especially vulnerable to these problems, and sometimes feel helpless or reluctant to seek help. They may be either chemically dependent or codependent, making an unhealthy attempt to take care of and control a chemically dependent person. Special programs for codependent and chemically dependent women can help them build happier and more confident lives.

Consequences

Abuse of alcohol or other drugs can destroy the relationships women value most, as family and friends lose love and trust for the abuser. A woman may also lose her job if her work deteriorates. She may also experience health problems, including liver disease and infertility. If she drives while intoxicated, she puts her life, her family's and others' lives in jeopardy. And if she uses alcohol or other drugs while pregnant, she may cause permanent health and behavioral problems in her unborn child.

Drugs and Pregnancy

When a pregnant woman drinks or takes other drugs, her baby is affected. Alcohol, tobacco, prescription drugs, street drugs and even over-the-counter remedies can all be harmful, even in very small doses. Drugs may increase the risk of premature delivery, stillbirth, miscarriage, or early death of the infant. They can cause sleeping problems, deformities and mental retardation. They can lead to learning problems, hyperactivity or poor coordination in the growing child. As little as one drink a week has been shown to increase the risk of stillbirth or miscarriage.

There is no known safe dosage of alcohol, and many other drugs are equally dangerous. Even caffeine may be dangerous to unborn children.

Suggestions

If you're pregnant or "trying," don't use alcohol or "recreational" drugs. Consult with your doctor before using over-the-counter drugs or prescriptions.

If you have trouble controlling your drug use, seek help from 12-step programs or health professionals who are knowledgeable about women's dependency issues. Your employee assistance program can provide you with referrals.

If you have special needs, such as for child care, financial assistance, vocational training or emergency shelter, your healthcare provider, 12-step program office or local women's center can help you find programs that offer the help you need.