



PRaMS

Positive Recovery and Midwife Support

A service for women with complex needs.

Making recovery possible in pregnancy.

Supporting women, babies and families for a brighter future.

DRINKING ALCOHOL WHEN PREGNANT

The Chief Medical Officers for the UK recommend that if you're pregnant or planning to become pregnant, the safest approach is not to drink alcohol at all to keep risks to your baby to a minimum.

See overleaf for information and advice on how to minimise the risk.

Contact:

Kim Walsh Specialist Midwife 07887 563708

Amanda Hill Recovery Navigator 07793246485

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Alcohol in pregnancy

When a pregnant woman drinks, the alcohol in her bloodstream passes freely through the placenta into the unborn baby's blood. As a baby's liver is not fully developed until the later stages of pregnancy, it cannot filter out the toxic substance. Therefore the alcohol circulates around the baby blood system causing harm to the baby's brain cells and other organs at any time during the pregnancy. (NO-FAS UK)

How many drinks will affect my baby?

Women trying to get pregnant or are pregnant are strongly advised that no amount of alcohol is safe in pregnancy. By not drinking alcohol at all through pregnancy, you are reducing the risk of damage to your baby to zero. Research tells us that the risk for the unborn baby increases the more that you alcohol you drink – binge drinking is especially harmful as it a large amount of alcohol taken over a short period of time, putting your unborn baby at significant risk of damage to developing cells. However, new research has shown that even drinking small amounts of alcohol can affect your unborn baby's brain whilst it is developing. Drinking alcohol in pregnancy increases your risk of miscarriage and pre-term birth (birth before 37 weeks).

Heavy use of alcohol/ use of alcohol significantly increases the risks of your baby being affected by FETAL ALCOHOL SYNDROME (FAS) and other associated syndromes.

Not all characteristics of FAS is obvious at birth and maybe more apparent as the baby grows and some developmental delays are noted.

Some babies affected by FAS may:

- Have a smaller head circumference
- Low birth weight
- Heart problems
- Limb damage
- Kidney damage
- Damage to the structure of the brain
- Eye problems
- Hearing problems
- Have specific facial characteristics – including a flat nasal bridge, upturned nose, thin upper lip and philtrum (the groove between the upper lip and the nose). (FASDTRUST)

Later, babies and children affected by FAS, can have problems with attention, concentrating, confused social skills, poor problem solving skills and behavioural difficulties.

Alcohol withdrawal in newborns.

It is known that babies who are born to alcohol dependant mum's, are at risk of having withdrawal symptoms- therefore it is very important health care professionals are aware a baby may have been exposed to regular alcohol intake during mum's pregnancy. This can help the baby be cared for in the right way as the baby may suffer withdrawals up to 48 hours after they are born, depending on when mum had her last alcoholic drink. Babies can experience symptoms of vomiting, tremors, poor sleep pattern and have muscle tension (NO-FAS UK RCM).

If you are experiencing problems with alcohol and need any support to stop drinking, please contact the team using the telephone numbers listed overleaf.