

Alcohol and Pregnancy Don't Mix

When you drink, your baby drinks too. Drinking alcohol during pregnancy could cause your baby to be born with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) or other alcohol-related disorders. A child with FASD may have low birthweight, problems with thinking, speaking, hearing, or learning, and behavioural difficulties. These problems do not go away when the child grows up.

There is no amount of alcohol that is known to be safe during pregnancy. So the best choice is not to drink any alcohol at all when you're pregnant.

If you do drink, you should know that no one kind of alcohol is safer than another. There is about the same amount of alcohol in:

- a bottle of beer
- a glass of wine
- a shot of liquor

Each of these affects your baby in exactly the same way.

If you have been drinking heavily, you may need counselling to help you stop. For your own sake, and your baby's, please look for the help you need. Contact Addiction Services or ask your doctor or public health nurse about programs in your community.



Taking Medicines

As soon as you know that you're pregnant, talk with your doctor about any drugs you are using. This includes all prescription drugs and all of the medicines that you can get at the drug store, such as aspirin, pain relievers, cough and cold remedies, and even vitamin pills. If you go to more than one doctor, make sure that all your doctors know that you are pregnant and that they are all aware of any medicines that you are using.

To be safe, you should not take any drugs of any kind except on the advice of your doctor. If you do need medication, follow your doctor's directions.

Any drug you take can reach your baby. So before you take any medicine, ask your doctor, pharmacist, and even your dentist these questions:

- What is it?
- What's it for?
- What will it do to me and my baby?
- What are the side effects?
- What is the smallest dose I can take?
- Can it wait until after the baby is born?

If you do drugs, so does your baby. Any drug you take reaches your baby. Your baby can become addicted to the drugs you use.

All street drugs like cocaine, heroin, and marijuana have serious and harmful effects on you and on your baby.

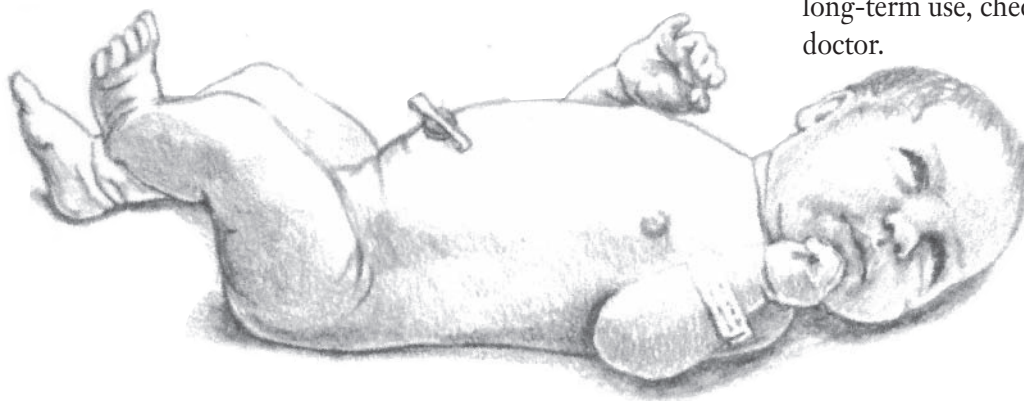
If you use drugs, you may find it difficult to stop on your own. For your own sake and your baby's, please look for the help you need. Contact Addiction Services or ask your doctor or public health nurse about programs in your community.

Don't Let Your Baby Do Drugs



Risks to Your Unborn Baby

Substance	Risk	Recommendation
Alcohol	Risk to unborn baby of low birth-weight, problems with thinking, speaking, hearing or learning and behavioural difficulties. This risk increases with amount and frequency of drinking.	“Safe” level is not known. The N.S. Department of Health Promotion and Protection recommends no alcohol during pregnancy.
Amphetamines	Can increase the risk of miscarriage, premature delivery, low birth weight.	DO NOT USE.
Antacids	Probably safe in occasional doses.	Use only occasionally and do not exceed dosage on label.
Antihistamines (e.g., cold and allergy remedies)	Little known about risks during pregnancy.	See your doctor before using.
Caffeine	Suspected of harming the fetus if taken in large amounts (coffee, tea, chocolate, cola beverages).	Limit caffeine to no more than 300 mg a day.
Cannabis (Marijuana, Hashish)	Risk of abnormalities in development of fetus, undersize baby, and later behaviour problems (addiction, withdrawal).	DO NOT USE. If you need help to stop, talk to your doctor, or local Addiction Services office.
Cocaine, Crack	Risk of miscarriage, premature delivery; possible malformations of fetus.	DO NOT USE. If you need help to stop, talk to your doctor, or local Addiction Services office.
Hemorrhoid preparations	No known risk.	Ask your doctor or pharmacist to suggest a suitable remedy. For long-term use, check with your doctor.



Drug	Risk	Recommendation	
Household chemicals, paints, cleaning solvents, fertilizers	Accidental breathing in of fumes may harm fetus.	Use with caution, in a well-ventilated area.	
Laxatives	Bulk-forming type (e.g., Metamucil) are considered safe.	Use other types only if your doctor has approved them.	
Nausea (morning sickness) remedies	Anti-nausea drugs vary in risk to unborn baby.	DO NOT USE unless your doctor approves use of this medication.	
Opiates such as heroin and illegally obtained prescription drugs (e.g., Percocet, Talwin, Darvon)	Risk of miscarriage, premature delivery, complications during delivery; baby born with breathing problems or withdrawal symptoms, slow mental and physical development.	DO NOT USE. If you need help to stop, see your doctor immediately. Unsterile needles used for drugs raise the risk of hepatitis and AIDS/HIV infection in both mother and unborn baby.	
Pain Killers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-prescription, containing ASA (e.g., Aspirin, Bufferin, Anacin) or acetaminophen (e.g., Tylenol, Atasol) • Non-prescription, containing codeine (e.g., 222s, Tylenol with codeine) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe for occasional use. • (Probably) safe for occasional use. 	For occasional use only. Check with your doctor before using regularly. Do not exceed recommended dose. Do not use ASA during your last three months of pregnancy. Check with your doctor.
Sleeping Pills	These vary greatly in risk to the unborn baby. If used regularly, baby may have breathing problems when born or may have withdrawal symptoms.	Use only if your doctor recommends. You may need your doctor's help to stop if you are a regular user.	
Tobacco	Smoking increases the risk of miscarriage, premature delivery, problems in labour and delivery, undersized baby, stillbirth and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Children exposed to tobacco smoke in the home have a higher risk of SIDS, breathing problems such as asthma and bronchitis, colds and ear and throat infections.	DO NOT USE. If you need help to stop, talk to your doctor, or local Addiction Services office.	
Tranquilizers	If used regularly, baby may be born with breathing problems or withdrawal symptoms.	Use only if your doctor recommends. You may need your doctor's help to stop if you are a regular user.	

Caffeine

Many of us use caffeine without realizing it. Did you know that there is caffeine in coffee, tea, cola, chocolate, and many medications?

Caffeine can affect you in several ways. It is a diuretic—which means it causes you to lose fluids by urinating more often. It also acts as a stimulant—which means it makes your heart beat faster. For some people, this can cause sleeplessness, headaches, irritability, and nervousness.

Health Canada recommends that women who are planning to become pregnant, pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers limit caffeine to 300 mg/day.

Caffeine in Foods and Drinks

Food or Drink	Amount of Caffeine (mg)
Coffee (6 oz/200 mL)	
Percolated	72-144
Filter drip	108-180
Instant	60-90
Tea (6 oz/200 mL)	
Weak	18-24
Strong	78-108
Some varieties of pop (one 12 oz can /355ml)	28-64
Chocolate bar (2 oz/60 g)	
Milk chocolate	3-20
Dark	40-50

Public Health Services

www.gov.ns.ca/hpp

