



# ALCOHOL DURING PREGNANCY

## FETAL ALCOHOL SYNDROME

Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause a birth defect called Fetal Alcohol Syndrome or FAS. If you drink alcohol during pregnancy, the alcohol can freely pass to your baby through your placenta and umbilical cord.

Alcohol can affect growing cells,

especially those in the baby's brain. The more you drink, the higher your baby's risk of developing problems that will last a lifetime. Alcohol can also pass through breast milk to your baby.

Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause:

- ◇ Premature birth (before 37 weeks)
- ◇ Low birth weight (less than 5 pounds, 8 oz.)
- ◇ Heart defects
- ◇ Unusual facial features
- ◇ Reduced IQ
- ◇ Vision and hearing problems

- ◇ Learning and behavior problems
- ◇ Miscarriage (death of baby before 20 weeks of pregnancy)

## REFRAINING FROM ALCOHOL

Since there is no such thing as a safe level of alcohol during pregnancy, it's best to avoid drinking any alcohol while pregnant and breastfeeding. You may find it difficult to change your drinking habits during pregnancy. Alcohol is often part of social activities, like parties and sports events. Below are some ways that you can avoid drinking during this time:

- ◇ Think about when you usually drink alcohol. Plan things to have instead, like fruity drinks or water.

- ◇ Explain to your friends and family why you don't want to drink alcohol during pregnancy. Ask them to help and support you.
- ◇ Get rid of all the alcohol in your home.
- ◇ Avoid places where you usually drink alcohol like at parties or bars.



If you need help with refraining from alcohol

- ◇ Tell your healthcare provider
- ◇ Call the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence or visit their website (1-800-622-2255 or [ncadd.org](http://ncadd.org))
- ◇ Call the Alcohol Detox Center in Serenity Hills, Watertown at 605-884-0650