



Let's have a conversation about



ALCOHOL DURING PREGNANCY

and beyond

PEOPLE WHO ARE PREGNANT, TRYING TO GET PREGNANT OR BREASTFEEDING

are encouraged to not drink alcohol for the health of their baby. This can be confusing when you may hear stories about how others used alcohol during pregnancy without any negative effects on the baby.

While nothing beats an open conversation with your health care provider, here are some facts about the risks of alcohol use during pregnancy to help inform that next conversation.

IS ANY AMOUNT SAFE?

There is no known safe amount of alcohol use during pregnancy. When a pregnant person drinks alcohol it passes directly from their bloodstream to the baby through the placenta. Research shows that alcohol can lead to negative health and developmental effects for the baby. A child is developing throughout pregnancy, so alcohol use at any time during pregnancy can cause problems.

HOW CAN ALCOHOL USE AFFECT MY BABY?

Drinking alcohol during pregnancy increases the risk of miscarriage or stillbirth. Infants exposed to alcohol during pregnancy may develop Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) which can lead to intellectual disability, attention difficulty, developmental delays, and vision or hearing problems. Often, children with FASD have distinctive facial features, small size, and other physical abnormalities.

I DRANK BEFORE I KNEW I WAS PREGNANT. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

By stopping use when you found out you were pregnant, the negative effects on the developing baby will be lessened. Let your health care provider know, as the baby might require some additional screening tests either during pregnancy or as an infant to ensure they receive the best care. If you continue using alcohol during pregnancy, please talk with a health care provider about supports for stopping use.

WHAT IF I CONTINUE TO DRINK?

If you do use alcohol while pregnant, the best thing to do is talk with your health care provider. Together, you can work to understand why you are using and the best course of action to be sure you move forward in the healthiest way possible for both you and your baby. The more alcohol you drink, the greater the risk, so being honest is the best way to help your baby.

IF I DRINK WINE OR BEER AND NOT HARD LIQUOR IS THAT BETTER?

Wine, beer, and hard liquor are all alcohol, just in different forms. One glass of wine has the same alcohol content as one cocktail or one beer, and they all can be harmful for a developing baby.

WHAT ABOUT BREASTFEEDING?

Alcohol passes into the breastmilk and may affect your baby, possibly causing sleepiness or sleep problems, or developmental abnormalities. Drinking alcohol can also lead to decreased breast milk production leading to slow weight gain in some infants. Some women try to pump breast milk so the alcohol will clear sooner, but this does not work as alcohol will continue to pass from the blood into the milk. It takes 2-3 hours for a single drink to clear and more time for additional amounts.

WHERE CAN I GET HELP?

If you continue to use alcohol even when you don't want to or know you shouldn't or have tried to quit but can't, you may benefit from formal support to stop using. There are counselors, peer recovery coaches, and 12 step programs that may give you the support you need to stop. VTHelpink.org has information about treatment options. Your health care provider is another resource to help find a care method that works for you.

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

Visit VTHelpink.org, call 802.565.LINK (5465) or talk to your health care provider.

For more information, there's no better resource than your health care provider. Remember, they're not there to judge. They're there to help you have the healthiest pregnancy possible by keeping the conversation going.