



# Alcohol and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASDs)

## Why am I being warned about alcohol and FASDs?



- Ethyl alcohol in alcoholic beverages is on the [Proposition 65](#) list because it can cause birth defects or other reproductive harm.
- Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause a range of lifelong physical, behavioral, and intellectual disabilities in the child, as well as miscarriage and stillbirth.

## What are fetal alcohol spectrum disorders?

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, or FASDs, are life-long physical, behavioral, and intellectual disabilities. They are a leading type of developmental disability. FASDs can occur in a person whose mother drank alcohol during pregnancy. The effects of this can include life-long:

- Intellectual disabilities and problems with behavior and learning. Children with FASDs might do poorly in school, have difficulties with math, memory, attention, judgment, communication, and getting along with others, and have poor impulse control.
- Heart, kidney, or bone defects, or problems with vision or hearing.
- Abnormal facial features, and growth and central nervous system problems.

Often, a person with a fetal alcohol spectrum disorder has a mix of these problems.

## How can fetal alcohol spectrum disorders be prevented?

Alcohol in the mother's blood passes to the baby through the umbilical cord. Women who are pregnant or might be pregnant should not drink alcohol at all. All types of alcoholic beverages are harmful, including wine and beer.

If a woman is drinking alcohol during pregnancy, it is never too late to stop. The baby's brain growth takes place throughout pregnancy, so the sooner a woman stops drinking, the safer it will be for her and her baby.

## Is any level of alcohol consumption safe while pregnant?

There is no known safe amount of alcohol to drink while pregnant.

**What should a woman do about her alcohol use if she is pregnant or might be pregnant?**

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) advises each woman of reproductive age to:

- Talk with her health care provider about her possible plans for pregnancy, her alcohol use, and ways to prevent pregnancy if she is not planning to get pregnant.
- Stop drinking alcohol if she is trying to get pregnant or could get pregnant.
- Ask her partner, family members, and friends to support her choice not to drink during pregnancy, or while trying to get pregnant.
- Ask her health care provider or another trusted person about resources for help if she cannot stop drinking on her own.

About half of all US pregnancies are unplanned. Even when pregnancies are planned, most women do not know they are pregnant during the first four to six weeks of the pregnancy. This means a woman might be drinking and exposing her developing baby to alcohol without knowing it.

**For more information:****General Fact Sheets and Resources**

- US Department of Health and Human Services  
US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
  - ▶ Alcohol and Pregnancy  
<https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/fasd/index.html>
  - ▶ Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASDs)  
<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fasd/index.html>
- American Academy of Pediatrics
  - ▶ Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Program Frequently Asked Questions  
<https://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/fetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorders-toolkit/Pages/Frequently-Asked-Questions.aspx>
- California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA)  
Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA)
  - ▶ Alcohol and Cancer  
<https://www.p65warnings.ca.gov/fact-sheets/alcohol-and-cancer>

**Proposition 65**

- California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA)  
Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA)
  - ▶ Proposition 65: Background  
<https://www.p65warnings.ca.gov/fag>
  - ▶ Proposition 65: The List of Chemicals  
<https://www.p65warnings.ca.gov/chemicals>