

ALCOHOL AND PREGNANCY



No amount of alcohol is safe if a woman is pregnant or planning to get pregnant.

All alcohol can be harmful to an unborn baby – beer, wine, cider and hard liquor.

How does drinking alcohol affect an unborn baby?

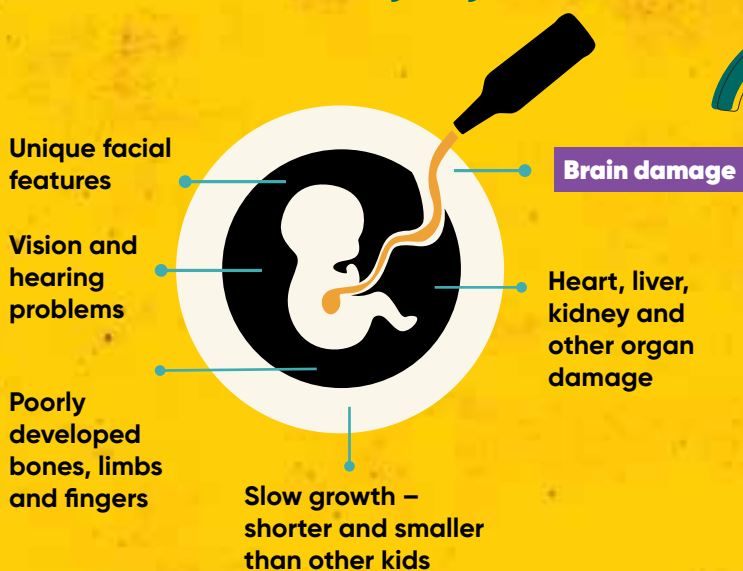
When a woman drinks alcohol, so does her unborn baby. Alcohol passes through the placenta into the developing fetus and blocks the baby's ability to get enough food and oxygen needed for normal growth. It can cause lifelong physical and mental disabilities.

What is fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD)?

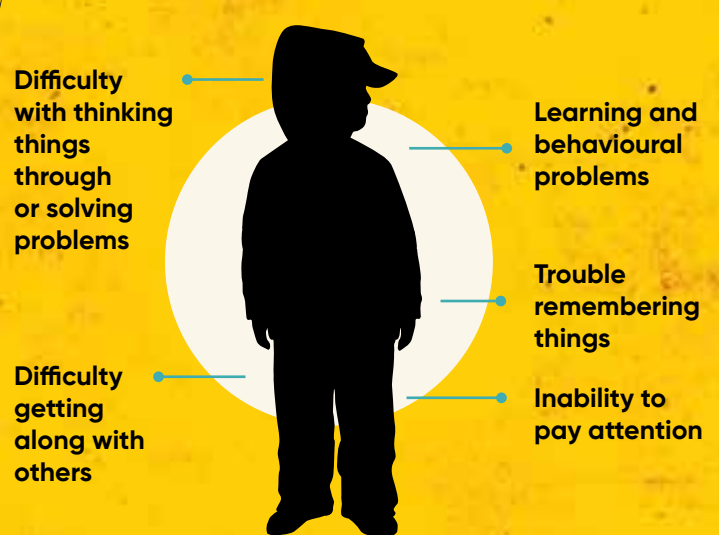
If a woman drinks alcohol during pregnancy, her baby may be born with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD). This means the baby can have physical defects, behavioural problems and other difficulties.

FASD is completely preventable if a woman does not drink alcohol during pregnancy.

If a pregnant woman drinks alcohol, her baby may have:



A person with brain damage may experience lifelong problems like:



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Is it OK to drink a "little" alcohol or drink on special occasions?

NO amount of alcohol is safe during pregnancy, because no one knows for sure how much alcohol causes FASD.



What if a woman drank alcohol before she knew she was pregnant?

Sometimes a pregnancy is not planned. A woman can reduce the harm to her baby by stopping drinking as soon as she learns she is pregnant. She can also visit the health centre and talk to a nurse. Her conversation will be private.

Does drinking alcohol while breastfeeding harm the baby?

It is best to avoid drinking while you are breastfeeding as alcohol goes into your breast milk. This may affect how the baby feeds, sleeps and develops.

If a woman who is breastfeeding chooses to drink alcohol on a special occasion, there are ways to reduce the risk to her baby:

- Allow enough time for alcohol to leave the body before the next feeding. It will take about two-three hours for the alcohol from one standard drink to naturally leave your breastmilk.
- Plan ahead. Express and store the breast milk for when you cannot safely breastfeed the baby.
- If a woman chooses to drink alcohol while breastfeeding and wants more information on how to safely do this, she should speak to a nurse at the health centre.



Need help staying alcohol-free during a pregnancy?

- Visit the health or public health centre and talk to a nurse.
- Speak to an Elder, a family member, or someone you trust.
- Contact the Canada Prenatal-Nutrition Program (CPNP) in your community.
- Visit the Government of Nunavut's Healthy Living website at livehealthy.gov.nu.ca.
- Call the Motherisk Helpline at 1-877-327-4636.

