


ALCOHOL

ALCOHOL + PREGNANCY

"There is no known safe amount of alcohol use during pregnancy or while trying to get pregnant. There is also no safe time during pregnancy to drink. All types of alcohol are equally harmful, including all wines and beer. FASDs are preventable if a woman does not drink alcohol during pregnancy." [CDC](#) 

We know that drinking alcohol while pregnant increases the chance of **miscarriage** or **stillbirth**.¹ Pregnant people who drink a lot of alcohol during pregnancy are at higher risk of having a baby with symptoms of **Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)** which include characteristic facial features, smaller head size, lower birth weight, and intellectual disabilities.^{1, 2}



No one knows exactly how much alcohol is safe to drink during pregnancy and it is probably different for each person.

Not every person who consumes alcohol during pregnancy will give birth to a child with symptoms of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

Long-term studies of children with alcohol exposure suggest that binge drinking or severe alcohol use disorder may be associated with behavior problems. Studies of low to moderate drinking have not found a universally negative impact.³

Some of the **permanent effects of FASD** include organ defects, limitations in thinking, reasoning, and learning. In addition, there are physical effects such as low birth weight, smaller head size, and temporary abnormal facial features.

ALCOHOL + LACTATION

Alcohol passes into human milk and is absorbed by babies if they drink that milk.^{4,5} **If you have plans that may include alcohol consumption, pump and store enough milk beforehand to feed the baby while intoxicated, or plan to use formula.** While intoxicated, if your breasts become painful or engorged, pump or hand express enough milk to relieve the pressure. Then discard it.

Recommendations for the time it takes for your milk to be safe for the baby range from **2-4 hours per drink**.^{4,5} If you are only going to have one standard drink, it is ok to feed the baby, have a drink, wait a few hours, and feed baby again without doing anything special.



If you still feel drunk or hungover, even if the recommended time has passed, wait until you feel better before providing milk to the baby. If you want to be 100% sure, **alcohol test strips** for breast milk are available in drugstores.

ONE SERVING OF ALCOHOL



12 oz
BEER



8-9 oz
MALT LIQUOR



5 oz
WINE



1-2 oz
LIQUOR

What treatment options are available for people with alcohol use disorder who are pregnant?

There are many approaches to treatment for people who want to **change their drinking** or **stop drinking** completely. A few common ways are:

- attending 12 Step meetings such as [Alcoholics Anonymous \(AA\)](#) or other free community meetings like [Moderation Management](#), [SMART Recovery](#), or [Harm Reduction for Alcohol \(HAMS\)](#) .
- group therapy, individual counseling, hypnotherapy
- using medications prescribed by a doctor to treat cravings

The medications available for the treatment of alcohol dependence are naltrexone tablets or injections (Vivitrol®), acamprosate (Campral®), disulfiram (Antabuse®) and gabapentin (Neurontin).

We don't have good information on how safe these medications are during pregnancy, but they are likely to be much **safer than continuing to drink**.

Consult with a provider before taking any of these medications while pregnant.

ALCOHOL WITHDRAWAL

In some cases alcohol dependency and withdrawal are associated with serious complications like seizures.

If you are alcohol-dependent and are trying to decrease your alcohol consumption, don't quit "cold turkey." Work with a medical provider, especially if you have had seizures before.

In rare cases, alcohol detox can lead to lethal complications. Ask for help.

