

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders

Reducing Alcohol-Exposed Pregnancies

What is the problem?

- The term “fetal alcohol spectrum disorders” (FASDs) is used to describe the many problems associated with exposure to alcohol before birth. **FASDs are 100% preventable if a woman does not drink alcohol during pregnancy.**
- Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause a wide range of physical and mental birth defects. Alcohol in the mother's blood passes through the umbilical cord and placenta to the baby. Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause miscarriage, stillbirth, and a range of FASDs.



What do we know?

- There is no known safe amount of alcohol to drink while pregnant. There is also no safe time during pregnancy to drink and no safe kind of alcohol. CDC urges pregnant women not to drink alcohol any time during pregnancy.
- Women also should not drink alcohol if they are planning to become pregnant or are sexually active and do not use effective birth control. This is because a woman could become pregnant and not know for several weeks or more. In the U.S. half of all pregnancies are unplanned.
- FASDs are 100% preventable. If a woman doesn't drink alcohol while she is pregnant, her child cannot have an FASD.

Did you know?

- About 1 in 8 pregnant women in the U.S. reports drinking alcohol in the past 30 days.
- About 1 in 50 pregnant women reports binge drinking (having five or more drinks at one time) in the past 30 days.

What can we do?

- NCBDDD continues to work with partners and health care professionals to promote awareness about this issue.
- The majority of non-pregnant women of reproductive age report alcohol use, with 12% reporting binge drinking (having five or more drinks at one time) in the past month. Since half of pregnancies in the U.S. are unplanned and some women continue to drink alcohol during pregnancy, it is important to address risky drinking among all women of reproductive age.

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- NCBDDD published *CHOICES: A Program for Women About Choosing Healthy Behaviors*, designed for use by professionals who will be conducting the CHOICES program and for trainers providing instruction on how to conduct the intervention. NCBDDD's CHOICES program is an intervention to prevent alcohol-exposed pregnancy among non-pregnant women of reproductive age by addressing risky drinking and ineffective contraception. The CHOICES materials are available for order at www.cdc.gov/fasd. NCBDDD continues to support the implementation of CHOICES in various settings, including clinics for sexually transmitted diseases and family planning, community health centers, and American Indian communities.

Accomplishments

- NCBDDD collaborated with the National Center for Health Statistics to include four additional alcohol questions on the National Survey on Family Growth in survey years 2011-2013 in order to obtain more accurate estimates of alcohol-exposed pregnancy risk among women of reproductive age. Data collection using the new alcohol questions began in September 2011.
- NCBDDD worked with the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) to revise previously developed educational materials for women's health care providers regarding alcohol use and reproductive health. Revised materials include a smart phone/hand-held application to screen women for at-risk drinking and a corresponding pocket card for providers.



Looking to the future

- In 2012, NCBDDD will work to advance implementation and adoption of alcohol screening and brief intervention (SBI) by:
 - Supporting the FASD Regional Training Centers in the development of plans to identify, recruit, and work with primary care systems in their regions to implement alcohol SBI.
 - Coordinating with the National Center on Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion to develop, test, and implement a module to assess if people are being asked by their health care provider about their alcohol use and receiving feedback on this behavior as needed.
 - Partnering with ACOG and the National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome to hold a stakeholders meeting with employers, health plans and other key partners better understand how to increase routine use of alcohol screening and brief intervention in primary care settings.
 - Collaborating with ACOG to develop additional resources for women's health care providers and improve efforts to promote alcohol screening and brief intervention.

Notable 2011 NCBDDD Scientific Publications

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