



Pointers For Parents-To-Be

Drinking Equals Danger for Pregnant Women And Their Babies

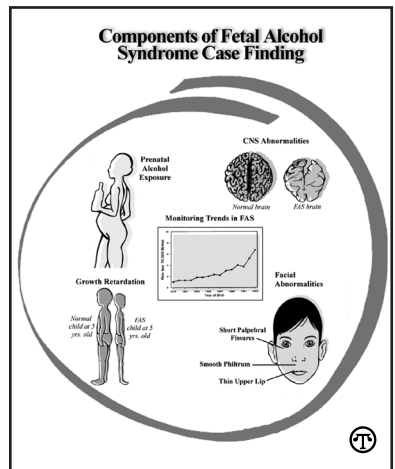
(NAPSA)—If you're pregnant, the decision to drink alcohol can have lasting negative effects on your baby. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), regular alcohol consumption during pregnancy can lead to Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), a disability that begins before birth and lasts a lifetime. Unfortunately, too many women put their unborn babies at risk when they decide to drink while pregnant.

Babies born with FAS lag behind other children in their physical and mental development and face learning and behavioral disabilities throughout their lives. FAS is one of the leading known causes of mental retardation.

"No amount of alcohol is considered safe for a pregnant woman. Any time a pregnant woman drinks, she puts her unborn child in danger of having physical problems, behavioral challenges and learning disabilities," said José Cordero, MD, MPH, Director of the CDC National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities (NCBDDD).

CDC statistics show that one out of every 30 women who know they are pregnant report "risk drinking," (seven or more drinks per week, or five or more drinks on any one occasion). Results of various other studies using different methods show that between 1,300 and 8,000 children are born with FAS in the United States each year. Many more are born with alcohol-related-neuro-developmental disorder (ARND).

"We know that alcohol is very harmful to a developing fetus because we see the effects in these children who struggle with disabilities every day throughout their lives," said Cordero. "We can



reduce the incidence of FAS by making sure every pregnant woman knows to avoid alcohol during pregnancy."

Consuming alcohol at any time during pregnancy, even during the first few weeks following conception when a woman may not realize she is pregnant, can cause irreparable damage during a critical period of fetal development.

Recent CDC findings indicate that one in seven non-pregnant women of childbearing age (18 to 44 years of age) reports "risk drinking."

"Should a woman be pregnant and not know it, drinking alcohol at this level would pose a big threat to a developing fetus," said Cordero. "Women of childbearing age should take care to reduce risk drinking."

CDC has recently developed the first state-based program solely devoted to monitoring the occurrence of FAS over time and to help evaluate the need for early intervention and special education services for children with FAS.

For more information on fetal alcohol syndrome, please visit, www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fas.