



Pointers For Parents-To-Be

Why Alcohol And Pregnancy Do Not Mix

(NAPSA)—Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause problems that last throughout a baby's lifetime. Yet, many babies are born with birth defects that are completely preventable.

One in eight women drink while pregnant. Rates among women of childbearing age for binge drinking or having seven or more drinks a week have not fallen in recent years. Binge drinking is defined as five or more drinks on one occasion.

The United States Surgeon General, Dr. Richard Carmona, stresses the importance of not drinking during pregnancy at his site: www.surgeongeneral.gov. While this message is important for parents, health care professionals and all women who can have children, it's especially important for those who are already pregnant.

Women Need To Get the Facts:

- Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS), one of a number of birth defects and developmental disorders known as fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD).

- These birth defects can cause problems in how a person looks, grows, learns and acts.

- These problems last a lifetime.

- No amount of alcohol is known to be safe. Even a small amount might cause problems.

- Alcohol can harm a baby at any time during pregnancy. It can cause problems in the early weeks of pregnancy even before a woman knows she is pregnant.

Ways to prevent FASD:

- If you are pregnant or are



Many birth defects could be prevented if women did not drink during pregnancy.

trying to become pregnant, do not drink alcohol.

- Even if you are not trying to get pregnant, but could become pregnant, do not drink alcohol.

- If you are pregnant and drinking alcohol, stop now.

Mothers to be are not the only ones who can prevent FASD. Friends and family members can play an important role by encouraging women to avoid alcohol during pregnancy. Schools, health and social service organizations, and communities can promote FASD prevention activities through education and intervention.

If you have questions about alcohol and pregnancy, talk to your doctor, nurse or other health care professional.

For more information, go to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Web site at www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fas.