

Alcohol, Contraception and Preconception

Information for Service Providers

Most FASD prevention efforts focus on **avoiding alcohol use during pregnancy**, but another option is to **prevent pregnancy during alcohol use**. Service providers can work toward ensuring effective and accessible contraception for all women who drink alcohol during their childbearing years and can address alcohol use with women who are considering or planning a pregnancy.

Strategies for Reducing Alcohol-Exposed Pregnancies

1

Reducing alcohol use

2

Increasing use of effective contraception

3

Both reducing alcohol use and increasing use of effective contraception

Alcohol Use and Unintended Pregnancies

50% Approximately one half of all pregnancies are unintended. The highest rate of unintended pregnancy occurs in the age group at highest risk of binge drinking (ages 15 to 19)

62% Percentage of women who report drinking alcohol in the three months prior to pregnancy

11% Percentage of women who report binge drinking before knowing they were pregnant

Preconception Care: Helping Women Prepare for Pregnancy

While 50% of pregnancies are unplanned, this means that 50% of pregnancies are planned. Service providers can help women to consider:

- What are the reasons I choose to drink?
- In what ways is alcohol a part of my life?
- How would I feel about not drinking at all at the next party I'm invited to?
- Do I associate drinking with smoking, eating, watching TV or other activities?

Can alcohol use affect fertility?

Emerging research suggests that alcohol use can have both short- and long-term effects of fertility.

- Light drinking (1-5 drinks a week) can reduce a woman's chances of conceiving
- Long-term heavy drinking can cause adult women to have irregular periods or stop ovulating, cause periods to stop altogether or lead to early menopause
- Heavy drinkers who become pregnant are more likely to have miscarriages
- Heavy drinking or binge drinking can lead to vomiting and reduce the effectiveness of birth control pills (emergency contraception is an option)

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The Prevention Conversation

It's time to talk about alcohol and pregnancy

