

# **Alcohol & pregnancy**



Pregnant women are strongly urged not to drink alcohol during pregnancy.

Drinking alcohol while pregnant has been shown to cause harm to a baby as it develops in the womb.

Alcohol used during pregnancy may also lead to long-term medical problems and birth defects.

## Information

When a pregnant woman drinks alcohol, the alcohol travels through her blood and into the baby's blood, tissues, and organs. Alcohol breaks down much more slowly in the baby's body than in an adult. That means the baby's blood alcohol level remains increased longer than the mother's. This can harm the baby and can sometimes lead to lifelong damage.



## DANGERS OF ALCOHOL DURING PREGNANCY

Drinking a lot of alcohol during pregnancy can lead to a group of defects in the baby known as fetal alcohol syndrome.

Symptoms can include:

Behavior and attention problems

Heart defects

Changes in the shape of the face

Poor growth before and after birth

Poor muscle tone and problems with movement and balance

Problems with thinking and speech

Learning problems



Complications seen in the infant may include:

Cerebral palsy  
Premature delivery  
Miscarriage or stillbirth



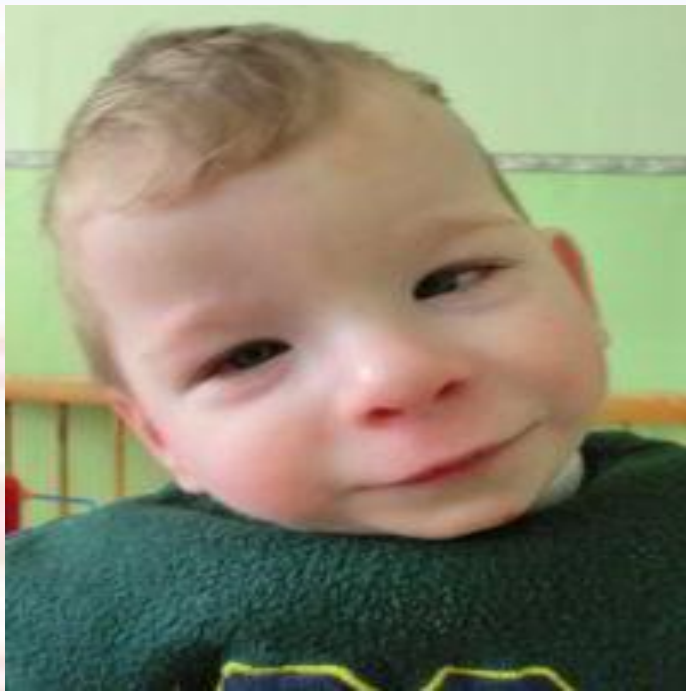
There is no known "safe" amount of alcohol use during pregnancy. Alcohol use appears to be the most harmful during the first 3 months of pregnancy; however, drinking alcohol anytime during pregnancy can be harmful.



Fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) is a pattern of anomalies occurring in children born to alcoholic women (Jones and Smith, 1973). The main features of this pattern are pre and/or postnatal growth retardation, characteristic facial abnormalities, and central nervous system dysfunction, including mental retardation (Stratton et al., 1996).



The severity of fetal alcohol syndrome symptoms varies, with some children experiencing them to a far greater degree than others. Signs and symptoms of fetal alcohol syndrome may include any mix of physical defects, intellectual or cognitive disabilities, and problems functioning and coping with daily life.

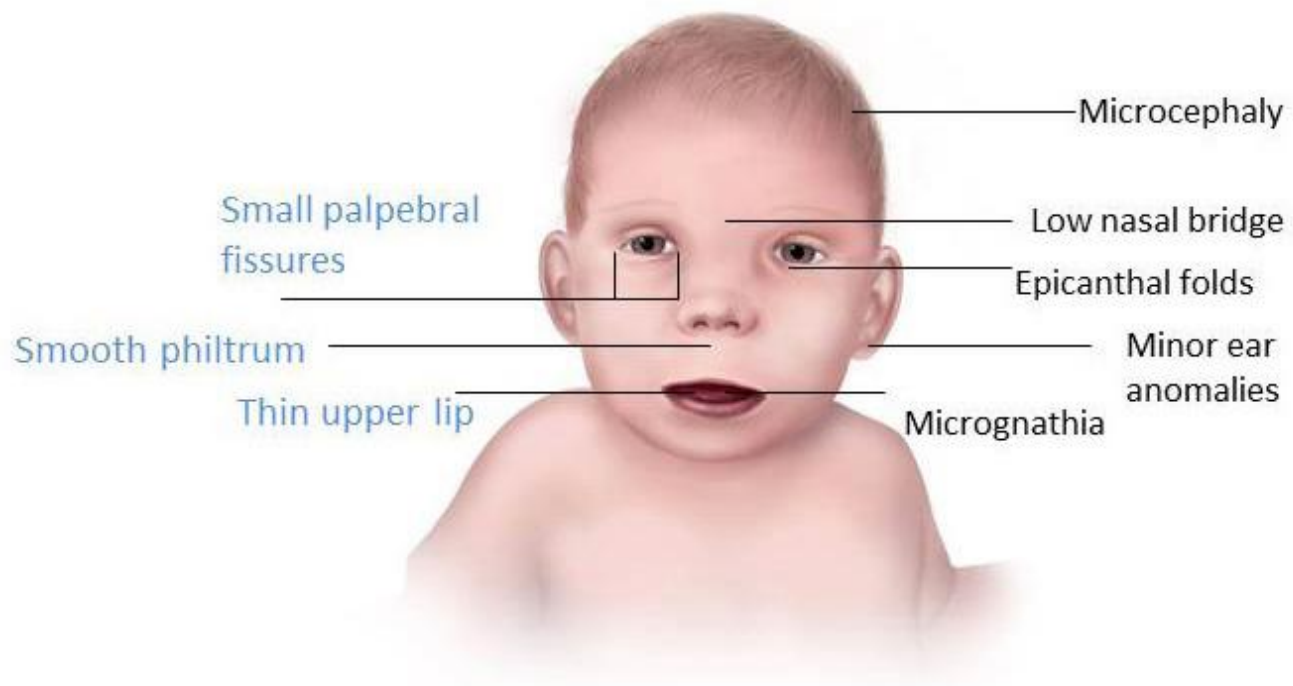




# Physical defects

Physical defects may include:

- Distinctive facial features, including wide-set eyes, an exceptionally thin upper lip, a short, upturned nose, and a smooth skin surface between the nose and upper lip
- Deformities of joints, limbs and fingers
- Slow physical growth before and after birth
- Vision difficulties or hearing problems
- Small head circumference and brain size
- Heart defects and problems with kidneys and bones



8 months



3 years



15 years

***THE END!***

