

the **RED CUP** Q&A



separating alcohol fact from fiction
EVERY TUESDAY IN THE DAILY WILDCAT

Q How much alcohol does a pregnant woman need to consume to cause Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS)?

A. Doctors and researchers report varying amounts that a pregnant woman has to consume to place her unborn child at risk for FAS. However, they all agree that the more you drink, the greater the chances are for FAS, as well as its severity. In fact, there is no known safe amount of alcohol to consume any time during pregnancy. This makes it possible to put your baby at risk before you might even realize that you are pregnant.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome is a combination of birth defects, learning and behavioral problems as a result of having mothers who consumed alcohol during pregnancy.

When a pregnant woman drinks alcohol, it enters her bloodstream, crosses the placenta, and reaches the developing fetus. A fetus metabolizes alcohol at a much slower rate than an adult, creating a Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) much higher than the mother's. Additionally, alcohol will interfere with the delivery of oxygen and nutrition to the developing tissues and organs, including the brain.

Signs of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome may include:

- Unusual facial features such as small head, eyes, and brain size
- Deformities of limbs, joints, and digits
- Slow physical growth
- Vision and hearing problems
- Learning disorders
- Short attention span, hyperactivity, anxiety, poor impulse control
- Heart defects
- Mental retardation and delayed development

FAS is one of the most common – yet preventable – causes of mental retardation. Two out of every 1,000 babies born have FAS.

There are enough high risks for pregnant teenage mothers and their babies such as premature birth, low birth-weight babies, STIs, and postpartum depression that adding alcohol to the mix (pardon the pun) does not help.

The take home message is that when a pregnant woman drinks, so does her baby.



wildfact

**Babies are born with 300 bones.
Adults have only 206.**



**Got a question
about alcohol?**

Email it to redcup@email.arizona.edu



www.health.arizona.edu

The Red Cup Q&A is written by Lynn Reyes, LCSW, LSAC, David Salafsky, MPH, Lee Ann Hamilton, MA, CHES, and Spencer Gorin, RN, in the Health Promotion and Preventive Services (HPPS) department of the UA Campus Health Service.