



Alcohol, drugs and pregnancy

Women should cease all consumption of alcohol and other drugs immediately upon discovering that they are pregnant. If this proves difficult, women should seek the help of a doctor or midwife.

Alcohol and/or drug use can harm the foetus regardless of how far a pregnancy is advanced.

Lifestyle and pregnancy

Women should enjoy pregnancy to the fullest, but an important role for future parents is to help protect the health of their child. An expectant mother's lifestyle can make a crucial difference for her child as this baby is a part of her. Everything that she eats and drinks is carried to her child – including alcohol. Any alcohol that an expectant mother drinks is carried by the bloodstream through the placenta and the umbilical cord to the foetus.

The baby

An unborn baby's organs are not sufficiently developed to break down alcohol, meaning that babies in the womb are affected more by alcohol than their mothers. This is true throughout the pregnancy, but the damage varies depending on the stage at which brain development is at.

The organs develop at various stages of pregnancy, and each organ is most sensitive at the point at which it is growing the fastest.

It is known that high alcohol consumption during pregnancy can permanently damage a baby – this may appear in the form of facial birth defects, an unnaturally small head and heart defects and deformed limbs.

There is also a risk of miscarriage.

Is it OK to drink beer?

There is no difference between beer, table wine and hard liquors. The alcohol in all of these has the same effect, and can harm the baby.

Breast-fed babies

It is also best for nursing mothers to severely limit their alcohol consumption, and preferably avoid alcohol altogether, during the period of time they are breast-feeding.

Any alcohol a nursing mother drinks is passed on in part to her baby, who is more affected by the effect of the alcohol than she is. Babies' nervous systems are still developing and can be damaged by alcohol.

Consuming alcohol also has an effect on milk production – it changes the smell and taste of the milk.

Illegal drugs

Illegal drugs (such as cannabis, ecstasy, amphetamines and cocaine) can cause miscarriage, placental abruption (separation of the lining of the placenta and the uterus) and premature birth if a pregnant woman uses them. There is also a danger that her baby's cognitive development will be impaired.