

## If You're Pregnant....

### Is there a safe amount of alcohol that a pregnant woman can drink?

Even small levels of alcohol consumed during pregnancy may affect the fetus in damaging ways. In pregnant women, alcohol is not only carried to all organs and tissues, but also to the placenta directly transporting alcohol to the fetus and to all its developing tissues and organs. **The best advice is not to drink during pregnancy!**

#### The First Trimester

- This appears to be the most critical time when abnormal features can be caused. The baby's organs are being formed. One of the last organs formed is the liver. When a mother drinks the baby has no liver to burn away the alcohol.

- The brain is particularly sensitive to alcohol, which diminishes the number of cells growing in the brain. The early loss of cells in the developing fetus may help explain overall retarded growth and low birth weight in babies with FAS.

***The most critical period of the fetus is the first trimester when the mother may not suspect she is pregnant. The best advice for a woman who drank before she knew she was pregnant is to STOP immediately and get regular prenatal care.***

#### Second Trimester

- Miscarriage is a major risk during this time. There may be times of fetal distress related to binge drinking.

#### Third Trimester

- The fetus normally undergoes rapid and substantial growth. Alcohol can impair this growth. This is also the time of greatest brain development. Research with animals indicates the brain and central nervous system are at great risk during the third trimester.

### Problems Associated with Drinking Alcohol During Pregnancy

- Obstetrical Problems – women who drink have more obstetrical problems than women who do not drink. These complications include:

- Premature separation of the placenta from the uterus.
- Vaginal bleeding
- Stillbirth

- Withdrawal – The children of women who drink heavily during the last three months of pregnancy may actually be born in withdrawal to alcohol. When babies go into withdrawal, they have trouble resting and it is difficult to stop them from crying.