

# Prenatal Exposure to Alcohol – A Worldwide Epidemic

## **Is This Happening in Your Community?**

### Who is at the highest risk for drinking while pregnant?

- White professional single women
- Low income blue collar women
- Teenagers in foster placement
- Indigenous women
- Women aged 22-29 reporting 70% unwanted/unplanned pregnancies

**Alcohol is far more damaging to the unborn child than meth, crack, and cocaine or any other recreational drug.**

### What can happen if you drink when pregnant?

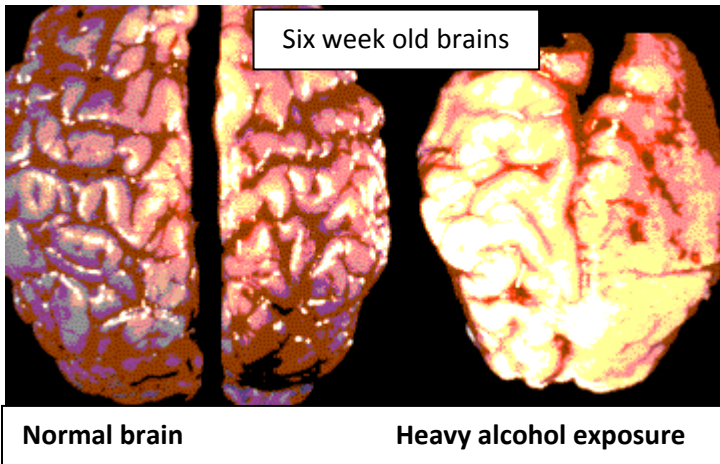


Photo courtesy of Sterling Clarren, MD

As little as ½ drink a day can lower reading and math achievement levels.

One binge of five drinks during the first trimester can lead to a full fetal alcohol syndrome child.

Heavy prenatal exposure to alcohol will damage the child's brain and body up to and including death of the fetus or infant.

Prenatal exposure to alcohol can result in premature birth, severe lifelong medical problems and severely lowered intellectual ability.

### What will you see in the behaviors of a heavily prenatally exposed adolescent?

(A child may display several or all of the following academic and social behaviors)

- Poor reading and writing skills
- Impulsive
- Struggles with generalizing- takes things literally
- Extra sensitive to stimuli – (sound/touch)
- Poor problem solving
- Poor control of sexual urges
- Poor interpersonal skills
- Emotionally immature
- Poor judgment
- Grandiose belief of own self
- Poor math skills
- Behavioral problems
- Poor abstract thinking - concrete thinking
- High pain and temp threshold
- Acts without regard to consequences
- Trouble controlling temper
- Does not understand personal space and boundaries
- Early involvement in alcohol and drugs
- Depression – self abusive
- Unrealistic involvement in cults/gangs/fantasy

A common expression when working with FASD adolescents: "Boys get locked up –girls get knocked up"

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder behaviors are often diagnosed as: Autism, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Attention Deficit Disorder, Sensory Integration Dysfunction, Bi-Polar, Asberger, Reactive Attachment Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Conduct Disorder, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, and Depression.