



SEPTEMBER 2026 EDITION

ALCOHOL & PREGNANCY

WHAT EVERY EXPECTING MOM SHOULD KNOW

NO SAFE AMOUNT • NO SAFE TIME • NO SAFE TYPE

Education • Prevention • Compassion • Healthy Pregnancy Support

A Crittenden County Cares Publication • www.crittendencountycares.org

The Bottom Line

There is no known safe amount of alcohol during pregnancy.

CDC guidance says there is no safe time during pregnancy to drink, and all types of alcohol can be harmful—including wine, beer, liquor, hard seltzer, cider and mixed drinks.



SAFE AMOUNT
Amount

No amount has been shown to be safe.



SAFE TIME
Timing

The brain develops throughout pregnancy.



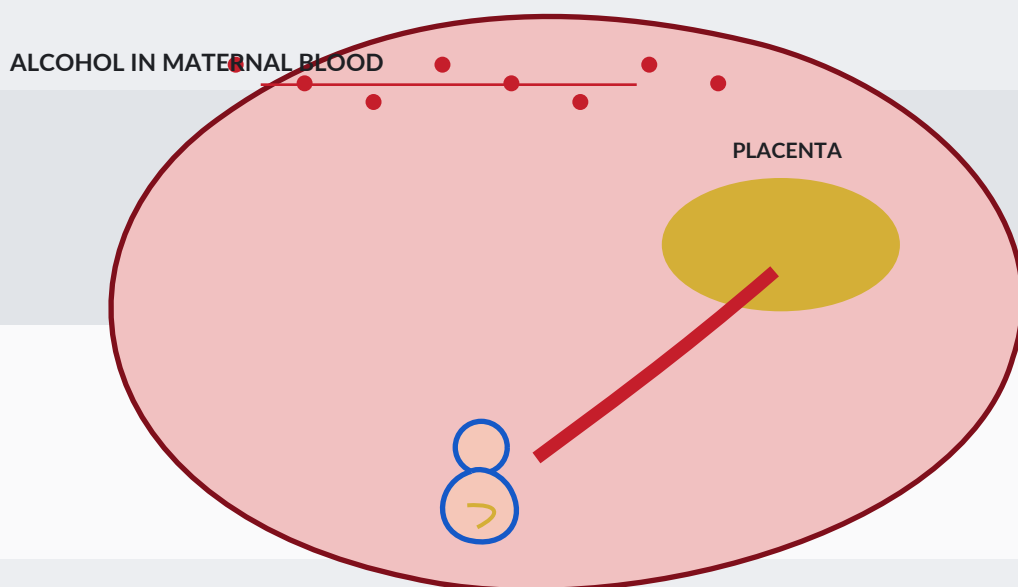
SAFE TYPE
Beverage

Wine, beer and liquor all contain alcohol.

2021–2024 U.S. data

- 15.2%** reported current alcohol use during pregnancy
- 4.9%** reported binge drinking in the past 30 days
- 2.2%** reported heavy drinking in the past 30 days

How Alcohol Reaches Baby



Alcohol can cross the placenta and reach the developing baby.

A shared bloodstream means shared exposure.

Alcohol in the pregnant person's blood can cross the placenta and reach the developing fetus. The developing brain and other organs can be affected at different stages of pregnancy.

1**Mother drinks**

Alcohol enters maternal bloodstream.

2**Placenta**

Alcohol can cross to the fetus.

3**Developing baby**

The brain and organs are still forming.

4**Outcome**

Effects vary; you cannot predict which baby will be affected.

Pregnancy Timeline: No “Safe Window”



Why all three trimesters matter

FIRST TRIMESTER

Alcohol exposure can affect early development and is associated with miscarriage and abnormal facial features.

SECOND TRIMESTER

Growth and the developing central nervous system can be affected by prenatal alcohol exposure.

THIRD TRIMESTER

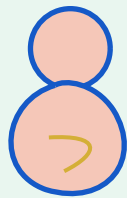
The brain continues developing throughout pregnancy, so exposure can affect development late in pregnancy too.

The safest choice is to avoid alcohol throughout pregnancy.

No trimester can be designated as a safe drinking period.

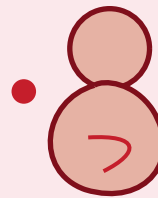
Healthy Path vs. Alcohol-Exposed Path

LOWER-RISK PATH



- Prenatal visits
- Balanced nutrition + hydration
- Avoid alcohol and other harmful exposures
- Ask questions early
- Build a support team

ALCOHOL-EXPOSED PATH



- Alcohol crosses the placenta
- Developing brain can be affected
- Risk of miscarriage, stillbirth and preterm birth rises
- FASDs may occur
- Effects vary and cannot be predicted

This illustration compares pathways; it cannot predict an individual pregnancy or child.

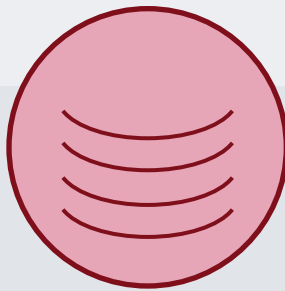
How the Baby May Be Affected



BRAIN DEVELOPS THROUGHOUT PREGNANCY

Brain & nervous system

- Learning and attention
- Memory and problem-solving
- Speech and language development



DEVELOPMENT CAN BE DISRUPTED

Potential effects of exposure

- Learning disabilities
- Difficulty with attention or executive function
- Behavioral or developmental challenges

PREGNANCY

Miscarriage
Stillbirth
Preterm birth

GROWTH & BODY

Low birth weight
Growth differences
Heart, kidney or bone problems

LIFELONG

FASDs
Learning & behavior needs
Possible need for extra support

Important: not every baby exposed to alcohol will have every effect—and some effects may not be obvious at birth.

FASDs: What the Term Means

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders

FASDs are a group of conditions that can occur after alcohol exposure before birth. They can involve physical, behavioral, intellectual and learning-related effects, and some challenges may become more noticeable as a child grows.

1**LEARNING**

Math, memory, language, school skills

2**BEHAVIOR**

Attention, impulse control, reasoning

3**PHYSICAL**

Growth, coordination, vision/hearing and other health concerns

4**DEVELOPMENT**

Brain and nervous-system development can be affected

September 9 • FASD Awareness Day

September 9 is a reminder that pregnancy lasts about nine months—and that preventing prenatal alcohol exposure is one way to protect developing babies.

Myth vs. Fact

MYTH

"Wine is safer than liquor."

FACT

All types of alcohol can be harmful during pregnancy.

MYTH

"I can drink after the first trimester."

FACT

There is no safe time to drink during pregnancy.

MYTH

"One drink cannot matter."

FACT

No known safe amount has been established.

MYTH

"If I drank before I knew, it is too late."

FACT

It is never too late to stop. Stopping now can improve the baby's health and well-being.

MYTH

"You can always tell at birth if a baby was affected."

FACT

Some effects may not be obvious until later in childhood.

If You Drank Before You Knew

Pause the guilt. Make the next healthy choice.

Many people do not know they are pregnant right away. If you drank before learning you were pregnant, the most important step is to stop alcohol use now and talk with your prenatal healthcare provider.

1**Stop alcohol use now**

Stopping at any point in pregnancy can improve the baby's health and well-being.

2**Tell your provider**

Share what you drank and when. Your provider can help you understand next steps.

3**Keep prenatal visits**

Regular prenatal care helps monitor your health and the baby's development.

4**Ask for support**

If stopping is difficult, ask for confidential help. You do not have to do it alone.

If alcohol use is difficult to stop:

Talk with a healthcare professional or addiction specialist. If you are in immediate danger or have severe withdrawal symptoms, seek urgent medical care.

Your September Healthy-Pregnancy Action Plan

Protect the journey. Support the mom.

1

Choose alcohol-free drinks at home and social events.

2

Let your support people know your goal.

3

Ask your prenatal provider every question you have.

4

Keep prenatal appointments and follow recommended care.

Reach out early if alcohol use is hard to stop.

Trusted resources

CDC: Alcohol and Pregnancy • CDC: Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders • NIAAA: Alcohol and Your Pregnancy •
Your prenatal care provider

This magazine is for education and community awareness. It does not replace individualized medical advice. For personal guidance, speak with your healthcare professional.

NO SAFE AMOUNT • NO SAFE TIME • NO SAFE TYPE

Every healthy choice you make today can be part of your baby's healthy journey.