

LETTER TO EDITOR: How much alcohol during pregnancy is too much?

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The Minnesota Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (MOFAS) is concerned that the recent research study from Denmark gives women a mixed a message. The study states that low to moderate drinking of up to 8 alcoholic drinks per week is generally safe for the developing baby. As the leading voice and resource on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) in Minnesota, MOFAS educates and advocates that there is no safe level of alcohol during pregnancy. “Studies like these are misleading to pregnant women and only places doubt in the minds of moms-to-be about the actual risk of drinking alcohol during pregnancy. There is overwhelming evidence of more than 30 years of research to the contrary,” states MOFAS Executive Director, Sara Messelt. “No wonder women are confused.” The fact is, alcohol has been widely documented as a teratogen, which is an agent that can disturb the development of an embryo or fetus, and can cause a range of developmental disabilities called Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD). It is the leading cause of preventable intellectual disabilities and behavioral difficulties. Here in Minnesota, over 8,500 babies are born each year with some level of prenatal alcohol exposure.

So, how much alcohol is too much? We don't know. There is absolutely no way of knowing how any amount of alcohol will affect your particular baby. Alcohol affects each pregnancy and person differently for a variety of reasons such as genetics and metabolism. But we do know that FASD is 100% preventable if alcohol is not consumed during pregnancy. For all the biological, foster and adoptive families raising children permanently harmed by prenatal alcohol exposure, there are countless stories about how “a little alcohol” has caused endless heartbreak for these children and their families. Why take the risk? Remember, 049 - Zero Alcohol for Nine Months.

MOFAS was founded in 1998 by former First Lady, Susan Carlson, and works around the state of Minnesota to educate and train about the dangers of drinking alcohol during pregnancy and to provide intervention and support for those individuals and families already affected. For more information contact MOFAS at 651-917-2370 or toll-free 1-866-90-MOFAS; 2233 University Avenue W., Suite 395, St. Paul, MN 55114; www.mofas.org .