

Perinatal Alcohol Use¹

Perinatal consumption of alcohol is an important topic due to the link between alcohol consumption during pregnancy and Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD), the range of effects from drinking during pregnancy.

According to the CDC “One of the most severe effects of drinking during pregnancy is fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS). FAS is one of the leading known preventable causes of mental retardation and birth defects. If a woman drinks alcohol during her pregnancy, her baby can be born with FAS, a lifelong condition that causes physical and mental disabilities. FAS is characterized by abnormal facial features, growth deficiencies, and central nervous system (CNS) problems. People with FAS might have problems with learning, memory, attention span, communication, vision, hearing, or a combination of these. These problems often lead to difficulties in school and problems getting along with others. FAS is a permanent condition.”¹

According to a recent CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report:

“The prevalence of binge drinking was 12.4%, both for childbearing-aged women overall and for those who might become pregnant, and 1.9% for pregnant women. The prevalence of frequent drinking was 13.2% for childbearing-aged women overall, 13.1% for women who might become pregnant, and 1.9% for pregnant women. The prevalence of any use of alcohol was 52.6% for the childbearing-aged population overall, 54.9% for women who might become pregnant, and 10.1% for pregnant women. Binge drinking prevalence for childbearing-aged women overall varied among participating states” with the range in New York State falling between 12.4% -16.2%ⁱⁱ.

Recent analysisⁱⁱⁱ of the national Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) survey data revealed disturbing information about the use of alcohol by women of childbearing age in New York State. New York State is 31st in the nation with 55.1% of women of childbearing age who reported any use (one or more drinks in the last 30 days), and 34th in rates of binge drinking in childbearing age women at 12.7%.

¹ Due to alcohol information on the birth certificate being underreported, NYSDOH Bureau of Biostatistics prefer not to release this information.

The Healthy People 2010 target is to increase abstinence from alcohol to 94 percent, and to eliminate binge drinking among pregnant women.

i <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fas/fasask.htm>

ii CDC, MMWR, Alcohol Consumption Among Women Who Are Pregnant or Who Might Become Pregnant – United States, 2002, December 24, 2004, 53(50):1178-1181

iii http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fas/monitor_table.htm