

## **Alcohol and Fertility – Why you should avoid it if you can't get pregnant**

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<https://natural-fertility-prescription.com/alcohol-and-fertility/>

Is there a link between alcohol and fertility? Alcohol is not such a harmless drug as we are sometimes lead to believe. Just because it's socially acceptable (or even expected) it does not mean you should abuse it. As with any habit forming substance the line between a social drink and abuse can be blurred depending on your general health, gender and physical, mental and emotional characteristics. A few after-work drinks with colleagues, a couple of drinks at dinner and a regular outing with your best friends on the weekend can soon lead to a drink too many for optimal health and fertility. If you cant get pregnant after trying for six months or more I advise you to avoid alcohol entirely. Here's why there is a connection between alcohol and fertility.

### **What is alcohol?**

Alcohol is a carbohydrate, a type of sugar. It is a highly volatile organic compound with a great affinity for water (meaning it's drawn to water). Wine, beer, spirits and other alcoholic drinks contain a type of alcohol called Ethanol – C<sub>2</sub>H<sub>5</sub>OH.

### **What are the effects of alcohol on your body**

Alcohol is a potent central nervous system depressant and sedative. In the beginning that glass of your favorite drink has a very soothing and relaxing effect on your body. You feel relaxed, chatty, use your arms and hands more to emphasize your speech and some of your inhibitions start to fade away. It is for this reason that alcohol is sometimes referred to as 'Liquid Courage'.

People often reach for alcohol again and again because of that initial euphoric and relaxed feeling. Forgetting what follows if they don't keep their drink to a minimum.

Excessive consumption can lead to blurred vision, slurred speech, impaired movement, slow reaction time and impaired memory. Long term effects can cause brain damage leading to blackouts and memory lapses.

Alcohol irritates the lining of the mouth and esophagus, which is experienced as a mild anesthetic effect. Over a long time this can make you more predisposed to the cancer of the mouth and the esophagus.

In addition alcohol makes other carcinogenic substances more aggressive which increases your overall risk of cancer. This is especially the case with the chemicals found in tobacco.

Because of it's high affinity towards water alcohol can cross the blood brain barrier, the placenta and into pretty much any organ and cell in the body, which gives us some insight as to how a link exists between

alcohol and fertility.

The liver produces hepatic enzymes called Alcohol Dehydrogenase which converts alcohol into fatty acids. People who drink a lot of alcohol can start to notice their belly becomes wobbly as more fat accumulates across their middle.

## **Alcohol and fertility. What is the impact?**

There is a connection between consumption of alcohol and fertility. In women alcohol consumption can lead to hormonal imbalances resulting from hypothalamic-pituitary-ovarian axis dysfunction. This in turn can lead to amenorrhea (lack of menstruation), luteal phase defect (insufficient progesterone, leading to thin endometrial lining of the uterus – insufficient for healthy implantation) and anovulation (failure to ovulate), adding to the correlation between alcohol and fertility.

In men alcohol can lead to poor liver function and increased estrogen levels which interfere with sperm production. Alcohol is also toxic to the sperm and hinders spermatogenesis in the testicles.

## **Effects of alcohol on your baby**

Alcohol is very harmful to women's eggs and men's sperm before conception and as little as ONE glass can reduce fertility by 50%! This can further lead to damage of the developing embryo and result in a miscarriage. How does this happen? If you are pregnant and having a drink your baby is having a drink as well! Alcohol can cross the placenta and enter the baby's circulation. Like caffeine, alcohol can damage the baby's underdeveloped organs and cells leading to long-term damage such as FASD (fetal alcohol spectrum disorder), spontaneous abortions, miscarriage and stillbirth.

Mothers who drink during pregnancy expose their unborn baby to the damaging effects between alcohol and fertility. According to the Missouri Department of Mental Health, Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse here is the list of abnormalities drinking during pregnancy can cause in the baby:

- Small body size and weight
- Slower than normal development and failure to "catch up."
- Deformed ribs and sternum
- Curved spine and hip dislocations
- Bent, fused, webbed, or missing fingers or toes
- Limited movement of joints
- Small head
- Facial abnormalities
- Small eye openings
- Skin webbing between eyes and base of nose
- Drooping eyelids
- Nearsightedness
- Failure of eyes to move in same direction
- Short upturned nose
- Sunken nasal bridge

- Flat or absent groove between nose and upper lip
- Thin upper lip
- Opening in roof of mouth
- Small jaw
- Low-set or poorly formed ears
- Organ deformities
- Heart defects or heart murmurs
- Genital malformations
- Kidney and urinary defects
- Central nervous system handicaps
- Small brain
- Faulty arrangement of brain cells and connective tissue
- Mental retardation -- occasionally severe
- Learning disabilities
- Short attention span
- Irritability in infancy
- Hyperactivity in childhood
- Poor body, hand, and finger coordination

Alcohol and fertility research is now suggesting that drinking before pregnancy can also lead to poor egg and sperm quality leading to an increased rate of miscarriages.

## **Alcohol and Fertility - What to do**

3-4 months before conception both you and your partner should stop drinking alcohol, to allow enough time for a new batch of sperm to form and eggs to mature in an alcohol free environment. Once pregnant the mother should refrain from drinking until she stops breastfeeding, or she should express enough milk in advance if she plans to have a few drinks.