

LET'S TALK

FACTS TO HELP ANSWER FEMALE PATIENTS' QUESTIONS
ABOUT ALCOHOL USE



Alcohol use increases the risk of heart disease, stroke, depression, and anxiety. It is also associated with some cancers, such as breast cancer, even at low levels of consumption.

For women, the Dietary Guidelines for Americans defines

- Moderate drinking as up to 1 drink per day.
- Heavy drinking as 8 or more drinks per week.
- Binge drinking as 4 or more drinks on a single occasion.

After drinking the same amount of alcohol, women tend to have higher blood alcohol levels than men, and the immediate effects of alcohol usually occur more quickly and last longer in women than in men.

FACTS ABOUT ALCOHOL USE AND PREGNANCY

- Alcohol use during pregnancy can cause birth defects and developmental disabilities known as fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs). Not all babies will be affected by prenatal alcohol exposure. However, it is impossible to know which babies will be affected. Therefore, CDC and major medical associations that provide guidance to healthcare providers advise pregnant women to avoid alcohol completely. There is no known safe amount, no safe time, and no safe type of alcohol use during pregnancy.
- You may not know right away if a baby has been affected by alcohol exposure. FASDs can cause behavioral, intellectual, and physical disabilities that are not always easy to identify in a newborn. Some FASD effects, such as learning difficulties, may not be evident until children are school age.
- It is estimated that 1%–5% of schoolchildren may have FASDs. People with FASDs can experience learning disabilities or difficulty with attention, poor judgment skills, mental health disorders, or physical problems such as problems with the heart or kidneys (among other effects).

Visit the CDC website for information on alcohol SBI and FASDs: www.cdc.gov/fasd