

Promoting Healthy Beginnings

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If you would like to contribute to our newsletter as a writer or with suggestions for future articles, please call, fax or e-mail the office.

Topics in Perinatal Health

Alcohol Binges Early in Pregnancy Increase the Risk of Infant Oral Clefts

Source: American Journal of Epidemiology July 2008

A study by researchers at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), part of the National Institutes of Health, shows that pregnant women who binge drink early in their pregnancy increase the likelihood that their babies will be born with oral clefts.

The researchers found that women who consumed an average of five or more drinks per sitting were more than twice as likely than non-drinkers to have an infant with either of the two major infant oral clefts: cleft lip with or without cleft palate, or cleft palate alone. Women who drank at this level on three or more occasions during the first trimester were three times as likely to have infants born with oral clefts.

"These findings reinforce the fact that women should not drink alcohol during pregnancy," said Lisa A. DeRoo, Ph.D., an epidemiologist at NIEHS and author on the study. "Prenatal exposure to alcohol, especially excessive amounts at one time, can adversely affect the fetus and may increase the risk of infant clefts." The causes of clefts are largely unknown, but both genetic predisposition and environmental factors are believed to play a role in their development.

The population-based study was conducted in Norway, which has one of the highest rates of oral clefts in Europe. The investigators contacted all families of newborn infants born with clefts between 1996 and 2002. The study included 573 mothers who had babies born with cleft lip with or without cleft palate and cleft palate only; as well as 763 mothers randomly selected from all live births in Norway. The average age of the mostly married mothers was 29 years.

Mothers completed a self-administered mailed questionnaire focused heavily on the mother's lifestyle and environmental exposures during her first three months of pregnancy when a baby's facial development takes place.

The researchers found increased risks of orofacial clefts among infants whose mothers reported binge-level drinking of an average of five or more drinks per occasion during the first-trimester compared to non-drinkers. Risk was further increased among women who drank at this level most frequently.

Both animal and human data suggest that it is the dose of alcohol consumed at one time during pregnancy rather than the frequency or total amount over time that matters most. "The greater the blood alcohol concentration, the longer the fetus is exposed. A single binge during a critical period of an infant's development can be harmful," said DeRoo.

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FREE HEPA Vacuums Available to Decrease Lead Poisoning Risks in Homes

by Catherine Bullwinkle, Quality Improvement Coordinator, Oneida County Health Department

Lead poisoning is a very serious problem in Oneida County due to the large number of homes built before 1978. Young children are especially at risk since they put everything into their mouth, crawl and roll around on the floors, and often drop toys or food items on the floors or window sills that have lead dust on it. Lead poisoning can cause damage to the child's brain, hearing loss, learning disabilities, attention deficit disorders, and cause serious behavior problems.

While lead-based paints were banned for use in homes in 1978, there are many houses in Oneida County that have lead-based paints that are chipping and peeling in them that could cause a lead poisoning problem, especially to children under age six and pregnant women. Lead from chipping and peeling paint and older windows that grind down the lead-based paint when they are opened and closed can quickly create enough lead-in house dust to contaminate an entire house. When the windows are opened in the Spring or the family uses a fan or air conditioner in those windows, the lead dust is blown around the whole house. The amount of lead dust that would fit in the common packet of sugar is enough to spread lead dust all over the home, and all of the items in it, and lead poison the family.

The Oneida County Health Department's Lead Primary Prevention Program is recommending that all families living in pre-1978 housing with children under age six or who have children under age six regularly visiting them such as grandparents, childcare providers, or foster parents, consider borrowing a FREE HEPA vacuum to clean their units before they open their windows in the Spring and again before Winter to reduce lead dust hazards.

The Oneida County Health Department's Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, through monies from its New York State Department of Health grant and through a grant from Excellus Blue Cross, has purchased hospital grade HEPA vacuums that are capable of cleaning up most of the lead-in dust found in the home. Families living in Oneida County may borrow these vacuums for FREE. They are cleaned between each use and new bags are provided along with the supplies to clean the vacuum when you are finished. The vacuums may be reserved by calling (315) 266-6147 and ask to reserve a HEPA vacuum. You cannot just stop in to pick one up, you must call in advance. They are loaned out on Mondays and Fridays. You will need to complete a very brief form when you come in and bring a NYS Driver's License. If you do not have a license, please discuss it with us in advance when you call and we will work with you to either find another type of picture ID or take a digital photograph for you when you arrive. You will attend a brief 10 minute training on how to set up, use the vacuum, and clean it afterwards, and be asked to sign the form stating you will return it in clean condition back to our offices at 185 Genesee Street Utica in the Adirondack Bank Building on the 4th floor. If you have loose paint in your windows, you may also ask to borrow a SCRAVAC scraping tool that hooks onto the HEPA vacuum. Please reserve this at the time you register for the vacuum. This will allow you to scrape the loose paint while the vacuum is running and remove and dispose of it safely.

All children should be tested for lead at ages one **and** again at age two. If patients live in housing built before 1978 and have chipping and peeling paint or older windows in poor condition, discuss with parents whether the child should be tested before age one or more frequently. If patients lack health insurance, please contact us at 798-5067 to discuss how children under age six may receive a lead test through the local health department.

For more information on lead recalls and reducing the risk of lead poisoning, go to www.ocgov.net and click on the left side Quick Link to ***Lead Recalls and Information*** section.

To Support MVPN....

You can support Mohawk Valley Perinatal Network programs and services for consumers and providers in Oneida, Herkimer and Madison Counties through a donation to our organization. MVPN is a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization. Donations are deductible for income tax purposes in the United States to the extent allowable by law.

Please make checks payable to "Mohawk Valley Perinatal Network, Inc." and mail donations to:

1000 Cornelia Street, 2nd Floor
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"Fortunately, heavy maternal drinking is uncommon in many populations, but the fact that it is happening at all tells us we need to do a better job of letting mothers know about the effects that alcohol can have on their baby's development," said Allen J. Wilcox, M.D., Ph.D., NIEHS researcher and co-author on the paper. In Norway, a separate study found that 25 percent of Norwegian women reported at least one binge drinking episode early during pregnancy.

Alcohol is a recognized teratogen, or an environmental agent that can cause malformations of an embryo or fetus. One of the most severe outcomes of heavy maternal drinking is fetal alcohol syndrome, a lifelong condition that causes physical and mental disabilities, including craniofacial malformations. There has been little research to determine if alcohol consumption is related to oral cleft risk.

The research was supported by the Intramural Research Program of the NIH, NIEHS. Researchers at the University of Bergen, the University of Oslo and the Medical Birth Registry of Norway also contributed to this study.

The primary mission of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), one of 27 Institutes and Centers at the National Institutes of Health, is to reduce the burden of human illness and disability by understanding how the environment influences the development and progression of human disease. For additional information, visit the NIEHS Web site at <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/>.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) - The Nation's Medical Research Agency - includes 27 Institutes and Centers and is a component of the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is the primary federal agency for conducting and supporting basic, clinical, and translational medical research, and it investigates the causes, treatments, and cures for both common and rare diseases. For more information about NIH and its programs, visit <http://www.nih.gov/>.

The chapter community grants program is designed to invest in priority projects that further the March of Dimes mission, support national and state objectives, and further our strategic goal of reducing disparities in birth outcomes. Proposals will be accepted from organizations with the capacity, competence and experience to accomplish project goals and objectives through one of the following priorities:

- Providing or enhancing preconception health and health care education and/or services.
- Providing or enhancing risk reduction education and/or services for pregnant women.
- Implementing disparity-related community programs that aim to decrease racial and ethnic disparities in birth outcomes.

In order to be eligible to receive a March of Dimes chapter grant, an organization must be an incorporated not-for-profit 501(c)(3) or for profit organization or government agency. The March of Dimes does not award grants to individuals.

Application for 2011 Community Service Grant funding is available at <http://www.marchofdimes.com/newyork/34269.asp>

Applications are due Friday, May 14, 2010 by 4:00 pm.

Elimination of Resource Test for Non-SSI Related Medicaid and Family Health Plus Applicants/Recipients

Effective for eligibility periods beginning on or after January 1, 2010, Family Health Plus and non-SSI-Related Medicaid Applicants and Recipients will not have resources considered in determining eligibility.

Non-SSI related applicants include:

- Single and Childless Couples
- Adults who spend down excess income to the Medicaid income level
- Children under 21 when comparing to Medicaid income level
- Parents living with their children under age 21 with income at or below Medicaid income level

This policy does **not** apply to SSI related applicants. SSI related applicants include:

- Aged, Blind and Disabled individuals (i.e. in receipt of Social Security Disability)
 - Exception** - An SSI-Related individual who also meets the ADC-Related categorical requirements (has a dependent child in the household) has a choice between ADC-Related budgeting or SSI-Related budgeting.
- Those applying for Cobra Continuation Coverage
- Those applying for Medicaid Buy-in for the Working Disabled



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On the Bookshelf

Healthy Mom & Baby

A magazine for women from AWHONN

A new resource for women is available free to health and health-related providers through the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses. The magazine and associated website, health4mom.org, covers topics related to conception, pregnancy, childbirth, postpartum health and infant health. The first issue, published earlier this year, includes articles on exercise during pregnancy and postpartum, gestational diabetes, oral health, epidural anesthesia, breastfeeding and cord blood banking.

Sign up for free copies for your patients and clients at health4mom.org under the "Nurse's Office" link.

Mohawk Valley Perinatal Network has a variety of resources available for consumers and professionals on topics related to pregnancy, parenting, breastfeeding, maternal, child and family health. Resources are available for loan at no cost from the Resource Lending Library at the Perinatal Network. We have professional journals, demonstration aids, books, videos and brochures for professionals and consumers. Stop by our office at 1000 Cornelia Street, Utica or call Emmie at 732-4657 extension 228.