



# Healthy Beginnings

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**mohawk valley  
perinatal  
network**

Promoting Healthy Births and Healthy Families

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## No alcohol during pregnancy is still your safest bet



pregnancy can be considered safe;

- Alcohol can damage an unborn baby at any stage of pregnancy;
- Damage to an unborn baby can be caused in the earliest weeks of pregnancy, before a woman even knows she is pregnant;
- The effects on baby's brain and behavior from drinking alcohol during pregnancy are lifelong."

In a new October 2015 report, the American Academy of Pediatrics stresses that no amount of alcohol should be considered safe to drink during any trimester of pregnancy, and other recommendations advise the same.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) state, *"There is no known safe amount of alcohol to drink while pregnant. There is also no safe time during pregnancy to drink and no safe kind of alcohol."*

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) *"reiterates its long-standing position that no amount of alcohol consumption can be considered safe during pregnancy."*

The Surgeon General first advised women to not drink alcohol during pregnancy in 1981, and issued a new advisory in 2005. The advisory says, "Based on the current, best science available we now know the following:

- No amount of alcohol during

"For these reasons:

- A pregnant woman should not drink alcohol during pregnancy;
- A pregnant woman who has already consumed alcohol during pregnancy should stop;
- A woman who is considering becoming pregnant should not drink alcohol."

Although all recommendations say the safest bet is to not drink alcohol during pregnancy, 1 in 10 women still report drinking alcohol during pregnancy. There is a lot of mixed information about drinking alcohol during pregnancy, which makes it more difficult for women to make decisions for themselves and their unborn babies.

Turn to page 2 for some common myths about drinking alcohol during pregnancy.

Sources:

[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) & [www.nofas.org](http://www.nofas.org)

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**The mission of the Mohawk Valley Perinatal Network is to improve birth outcomes and maternal, child and family health.**

## No alcohol during pregnancy is still your safest bet, continued



**Myth #1: “My friends or family members drank a bit and their kids are fine.”** Every pregnancy is different. Not everyone who drinks while pregnant will have a child with noticeable problems at birth, adolescence, or even adulthood. Sometimes problems caused by a mother drinking alcohol during her pregnancy aren't seen in a child from the outside, but happen in the brain. Also, some children may have problems caused by prenatal alcohol exposure that may not show up until school-age or later, such as problems with learning and behavior.

**Myth #2: “My doctor said it's fine to have a glass of wine or two while pregnant.”** Unfortunately, many doctors are not updated about the risks associated with prenatal alcohol exposure. Some doctors tell women that it's okay to drink a little wine because they are not comfortable talking with women who might not be interested in giving up alcohol or have

difficulty doing so.

**Myth #3: “There is no evidence of any effects from just one drink”** Dr. Michael Charness of Harvard Medical School gives just one example: “We've been able to show very striking effects of alcohol on the L1 cell adhesion molecule, a critical molecule for development, at concentrations of alcohol that a woman would have in her blood after just one drink.”

**Myth #4: “Drinking wine is better than using heroin or cocaine while pregnant.”** Alcohol, including wine, causes far more damage to the developing baby than any other drug—including cocaine, heroin, and marijuana.

**Myth #5: “Alcohol can only cause physical deformities. If the baby looks normal, it must be fine.”** Most children with damage from prenatal alcohol exposure have no physical birth defects, only cognitive and/or behavioral consequences. There is such a wide range of effects that most subtle behavioral and cognitive difficulties are rarely diagnosed as alcohol-related. Damage from alcohol is called FASD (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders).

Alcohol is toxic to a developing baby just like carbon monoxide and lead. Alcohol causes the death of developing brain cells in an unborn baby. Current recommendations advise pregnant women not to risk exposing their developing unborn baby to any amount of a toxic substance.

## Need Help? Have a question about where to find services? Call 2-1-1.

Do you need help finding food, housing, health services, help managing finances, job assistance, help caring for a child or elderly person, mental health or substance abuse issues assistance, tax help, transportation, or education and volunteer opportunities? You can now call **2-1-1** to talk to someone who can help connect you with up-to-date information about health and human services programs in Madison, Oneida, and Herkimer Counties. 2-1-1 Mid-York provides a staffed contact center

where trained call specialists are available to speak with callers 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and 365 days a year. The service is free, confidential and multi-lingual. 2-1-1 call specialists can be reached by dialing 2-1-1 or 844-DIAL-211. Both numbers are toll free. 2-1-1 Mid-York is a program of the United Way of the Valley and Greater Utica Area.

If you have a burning building...call 9-1-1, if you have a burning question....call 2-1-1.

## The toothbrush — still the most powerful tool for fighting cavities



February is National Children's Dental Health Month. Out of all of the recommendations about children and oral health, one thing is clear: if you brush your child's teeth, they may have less cavities. Many parents think that having healthy teeth may cost a lot of money. Although it is true that "the rate of untreated dental disease among low-income children aged 2 to 5 years is almost 5 times higher than that of high-income families" (American Journal of Public Health), toothbrushing remains the single most effective way to prevent cavities.

**WHY tooth-brushing?** When we go too long without brushing our teeth, the germs that live in our mouths grow and multiply. This is called plaque. If we don't brush away the germs and plaque, it hardens and becomes tartar, which is too hard for a toothbrush to scrape away. When we eat foods that contain starches or sugars, the germs that live in our mouths and on our teeth eat the starch and sugar. The germs then turn the starches and sugars into acid, which sits on your teeth and wears away enamel, eventually causing cavities. Every time we brush our teeth, we break up and brush away these germs and plaque so that they cannot make acid or cavities. The less germs on our teeth from daily brushing, the less cavities we will have. *\*Note: This is also a good reason to feed your children less sugary, starchy foods, and visit the dentist twice a year.*

**WHO should brush?** Everyone! As soon as your baby starts breastfeeding or drinking formula (these have sugars in them!), start wiping out his mouth with a clean, wet washcloth to remove any leftover milk. As soon as your baby's first tooth comes in, you can start brushing—the key is to remove cavity-causing germs from the gums and teeth surface. You should brush your child's teeth for them until they are about 8 years old. Until then, they don't usually have the motor functions to make the tiny circles with the toothbrush that breaks up the germs and plaque. *\*Note: Try brushing with your hand over your child's hand to teach them the right way to brush.*

**WHEN should I brush?** Twice a day, everyday! If you have trouble brushing twice a day, before bed is the most important time to brush. *\*Note: If your child goes to daycare during the day, talk to your daycare provider to see if they can help your child brush after breakfast in the morning.*

**WHAT should I brush with?** As soon as your child's first tooth comes in, you can brush with a soft toothbrush. Adding a smear (barely noticeable amount) of fluoridated toothpaste to just coat each tooth will help strengthen enamel and prevent cavities. A small amount should be used so that children do not swallow toothpaste. Floss your child's teeth for them once a day also, as soon as the teeth begin to touch. *\*Note: Talk to your child's pediatrician about fluoride supplements and ask if your town has fluoridated water.*

**HOW should I brush my child's teeth?** Make sure to brush in a circular motion, brushing 5 circles on each surface of each tooth. This should take about 2 minutes. When flossing, think about it as tooth-brushing or "scrubbing" the hard-to-reach spaces between teeth.

If you are having trouble finding a toothbrush for your child, call Mohawk Valley Perinatal Network at (315) 732-4657 for help.



**We'd like to hear from you!**  
 Send information about upcoming events or ideas for future articles to: MVPN Newsletter, 1000 Cornelia Street, 2nd Floor, Utica, NY 13502; Fax: 732-5640; Email: dhaldenwang@newfamily.org

### Utica Community Health Center

Affordable Dental Care, including Oral Exams, Cleanings, Fillings, Dentures, Oral Cancer Screenings, X-rays, Sealants, Extractions, and Partial

Accepting Medicaid, Medicare, Child Health Plus, Private Insurance and Sliding fee scale



**1651 Oneida Street, Utica  
 (315) 793-7600**

### The Baby Weight Station at Oneida County Health Department

- Get answers to your questions from a Certified Lactation Counselor
- Check your baby's weight

**We want to work with you to solve problems and build confidence so you can breastfeed as long as you would like!**

**Drop in Fridays 1-4 or call for an appointment.**

Oneida County Health Department  
 406 Elizabeth Street, Utica New York

Please call 798-5906 or 798-5747 for more information or to make an appointment!



### Do you need help quitting drinking?

Call the Center for Family Life and Recovery at: **(315) 733-1709**



Need Help? Have a question about where to find services? Call 2-1-1.



**Get Connected. Get Answers.**

Madison • Oneida • Herkimer

### Pregnant?

**Protect yourself and your baby.**

**Get early prenatal care.**

### Prenatal Care - Medicaid Prenatal Services Program

Early and regular check-ups are important to you and your baby's health.

Medicaid Prenatal Services Program offers complete pregnancy care and other health care services to women and teens who live in New York State.

And there's no cost to eligible women who participate in MOMS or Medicaid Prenatal Services!

Call MVPN at 732-4657 or toll free at 1-877-267-6193 for more information.