

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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Detroit, Michigan – The Developmental Disabilities Institute at Wayne State University is joining the cause to increase awareness of the risks of drinking alcohol while pregnant. The U.S. Surgeon General advises pregnant women and women who are considering becoming pregnant to abstain from alcohol consumption to eliminate alcohol-exposed pregnancies (FASDs);<sup>1</sup> yet it is estimated that 40,000 babies are born each year with FASDs, which describe a range of effects that can happen to a fetus when a woman drinks alcohol during her pregnancy.<sup>2</sup>

FASDs are caused by a woman drinking alcohol during pregnancy. Alcohol in the mother's blood passes to the baby through the placenta and the umbilical cord. When a woman drinks alcohol so does her baby. There is no known safe amount or type of alcohol to drink during pregnancy. There is also no safe time to drink during pregnancy, including before a woman knows she is pregnant. FASDs can impact children's physical, mental, behavioral, or cognitive development. The most recognized condition along the continuum of FASDs, fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS), is characterized by growth deficiencies, central nervous system disabilities, and specific facial characteristics, and is the most preventable form of intellectual disability. The number of children born with FAS alone is comparable to spina bifida or Down syndrome.<sup>3</sup>

To prevent FASDs, a woman should not drink alcohol while she is pregnant or if she might be pregnant. This is because a woman often does not know she is pregnant for up to 4 to 6 weeks after conception. In the United States, nearly half of all pregnancies are unplanned. If a woman is drinking alcohol during pregnancy, it is never too late to stop drinking. Because brain growth takes place throughout pregnancy, the sooner a woman stops drinking the safer it will be for her and her baby.

Human service organizations, health care professionals, and the public are called to action to work together to reduce the occurrence of FASDs by increasing awareness, becoming educated, and improving public health efforts about the message that women who are pregnant or who might be pregnant should abstain from alcohol.

For more information on alcohol use during pregnancy and FASDs, visit [www.cdc.gov/fasd](http://www.cdc.gov/fasd) or <http://ddi.wayne.edu/FASD.php>.

### ***“Pregnancy and alcohol don't mix. Why take the risk?”***

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<sup>1</sup>US Department of Health and Human Services. US Surgeon General releases advisory on alcohol use in pregnancy. Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services; 2005. Available at <https://wayback.archive-it.org/3926/20140421162517/http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/news/2005/02/sg02222005.html>. Accessed July 1, 2014.

<sup>2</sup>May PA & Gossage JP. Estimating the prevalence of fetal alcohol syndrome: A summary. *Alcohol Research & Health* 2001;25(3):159-167.

<sup>3</sup>Bertrand J, Floyd RL, Weber MK, O'Connor M, Riley EP, Johnson KA, Cohen DE, NTFFAS/E. *Fetal Alcohol Syndrome: Guidelines for Referral and Diagnosis*. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 2004.

<sup>4</sup>Kesmodel US, Bertrand J, Størvring H, Skarpnæs B, Denny CH, Mortensen EL, and the Lifestyle During Pregnancy Study Group. The effect of different alcohol drinking patterns in early to mid pregnancy on the child's intelligence, attention, and executive function. *BJOG* 2012;119(10):1180-1190.