



Impact of Alcohol, Tobacco and Illicit Drugs on Women



- Approximately 1 in 8 pregnant women report any alcohol use. (Source: CDC, 2009)
- Approximately 6.6% of pregnant women engage in binge* drinking in the first trimester. (Source: MDH, 2009)
- In MN, 16.2% of pregnant women smoke. (Source: 2007 PRAMS self-report)
- While most pregnant women do not abuse illicit drugs, young women, ages 15-17 had a higher rate of use (22.6%) than women of the same age who were not pregnant (13.3%). (Source: 2006/2007 National Survey on Drug Use and Health)
- Among Minnesotans, the most frequently consumed substances include:
 - alcohol (60.5% vs. 54.8% for the U.S.)
 - cigarettes (23.7% vs. 30.1% for the U.S.)
 - marijuana (4.1% vs. 8.0% for the U.S.)
 (Source: Women & Substance Use in the Childbearing Years, MDH)

Of these, alcohol produces by far the most serious neurobehavioral effects in the fetus. This table shows various effects of different substances. Only alcohol can produce all of the noted problems. In addition, combinations of substances (e.g., alcohol and tobacco) can produce more serious effects than either substance alone. Many women use multiple substances.

Effect on Newborns	Alcohol	Tobacco	Heroin	Meth *	Cocaine	Marijuana
Growth deficiency	X	X	X	X	X	X
Behavior problems	X	X	X	X	X	X
Cognitive problems	X	X	X	X	X	X
Motor deficits	X	X				
Developmental delays	X			X	X	X
Facial malformations	X					
Physical defects	X			X	X	X

* **Methamphetamine.** Source: Adapted from SAMHSA FASD Center of Excellence; MN Dept of Health,; North Dakota Dept. of Health

*Binge drinking was defined as 5+ drinks at one time; frequent use was 7+ drinks in a week. In 2005, the CDC changed the definition of binge drinking for women to four or more drinks at one time.

