

Alcohol Consumption Among Women Who Are Pregnant or Who Might Become Pregnant

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) monitors the prevalence of alcohol use among women of childbearing age through a monthly, state-based, random-digit-dialed telephone survey of the U.S. population. Participants are asked about their use of alcohol during the 30 days preceding the interview, as well as their pregnancy status.

Of the women surveyed by the CDC, 2,689 reported that they were pregnant and 4,404 women reported that they might become pregnant. The prevalence of binge drinking was 12.4%, both for child-bearing aged women overall and for those who might become pregnant, and 1.9% for pregnant women. The prevalence of frequent drinking was 13.2% for childbearing-aged women overall, 13.1% for women who might become pregnant, and 1.9% for pregnant women. The prevalence for any use of alcohol was 52.6% for the childbearing-aged population overall, 54.9% for women who might become pregnant, and 10.1% for pregnant women.

As CDC reports, this recent survey provides an opportunity to monitor alcohol consumption among women of childbearing age, including those who were pregnant and, for the first time at the national level, those who might become pregnant. The results of the survey indicate that the prevalences of alcohol use among women who might become pregnant were

similar to those for childbearing-aged women overall. In addition, prevalences for childbearing-aged women overall and those who were pregnant were similar to those reported previously. The findings indicated that more than half of women who might become pregnant reported drinking alcohol, including 12.4% who reported binge drinking and, therefore, were at particular risk for an alcohol-exposed pregnancy.

As CDC concludes, these findings signal the need for continued efforts to inform all women of childbearing age about the adverse effects of alcohol on pregnancy, and to identify and intervene with those women at higher risk for alcohol-exposed pregnancy. For more information regarding the latest CDC report, please see MMWR # 53(50): 1178-1181, 2004.

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