Alcohol Use and Binge Drinking Among Women of Childbearing Age

According to information published by the CDC’s National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, alcohol consumption among pregnant women is still an important public health concern. The report, “Alcohol use and binge drinking among women of childbearing age – United States, 2006-2010” was published in the CDC’s Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR).

The main findings from the CDC’s data analyses were:

- 7.6% of pregnant women (or 1 in 13) and 51.5% of nonpregnant women (or 1 in 2) reported drinking alcohol in the past 30 days.
- Among pregnant women, the highest estimates of reported alcohol use were among those who were:
  - Aged 35-44 years (14.3%)
  - White (8.3%)
  - College graduates (10.0%)
  - Employed (9.6%)
- 1.4% of pregnant women (or 1 in 71) and 15.0% of nonpregnant women (or 1 in 7) reported binge drinking in the past 30 days. (Binge drinking was defined as having consumed four or more drinks on an occasion at least one time in the past 30 days.)
- Among binge drinkers, the average frequency and intensity of binge episodes were similar, about three times per month and approximately six drinks on one occasion, among those who were pregnant and those who were not.
- Among nonpregnant binge drinkers, binge drinking prevalence, frequency, and intensity were highest among those aged 18-24 years.
The report emphasizes the need for continued education and information dissemination toward women of childbearing age. Alcohol consumption, particularly excessive alcohol consumption, during childbearing years can result in alcohol-exposed pregnancies and risk of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD.) For more information on this CDC MMWR, please go to www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fasd.

For further information regarding alcohol use during pregnancy, please contact Karen Kuehn Howell, Ph.D., at the Center for Maternal Substance Abuse and Child Development, Emory University School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, 12 Executive Park Drive NE, Atlanta, Georgia, 30329. You can also phone us at 404-712-9829 or visit our website at http://www.emory.edu/MSACD

The Center for Maternal Substance Abuse and Child Development is funded by the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities.