

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Facts

NOVA Activity **Life's Greatest Miracle**

Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and Fetal Alcohol Effect (FAE). When a pregnant woman drinks alcohol, the developing embryo and fetus drinks, too. Because of its relative size to the mother and because it metabolizes alcohol more slowly than the adult mother, the developing embryo and fetus experiences higher levels of alcohol concentration. The U.S. Public Health Service has indicated that there is no safe level of alcohol use during pregnancy.

FAS is a cluster of related conditions. FAS includes:

- facial abnormalities (such as small eyelid openings, short nose, flat mid-face)
- poor coordination
- poor growth
- hyperactive behavior
- learning disabilities
- developmental disabilities
- mental retardation or low IQ

Some babies are diagnosed with FAS. Others have only some of the symptoms, a condition known as Fetal Alcohol Effect.

Questions

Write your answers on a separate sheet of paper.

- ① Would binge drinking once or twice a week be more likely to affect facial features during the first, second, or third trimester of pregnancy? Explain your answer.
- ② If a pregnant woman drinks two glasses of wine every day during her third trimester, would that be more likely to affect development of facial features or brain function? Explain why.
- ③ If a nursing mother continues to drink heavily, could her drinking continue to affect the baby's growth? Facial features? Brain development? Explain your answer.

