

## **FACTS ABOUT FETAL ALCOHOL SYNDROME AND OTHER ALCOHOL-RELATED BIRTH DEFECTS**

- \* BIRTH DEFECTS ARE ABNORMALITIES OF BODY STRUCTURE OR FUNCTION THAT ARE PRESENT AT BIRTH.
- \* FETAL ALCOHOL SYNDROME (FAS) CONSISTS OF THE COMBINATION OF REDUCED GROWTH, UNUSUAL FACIAL FEATURES, BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS, AND OFTENTIMES MENTAL RETARDATION THAT OCCUR IN AN INDIVIDUAL AS A RESULT OF THE MOTHER DRINKING ALCOHOL DURING HER PREGNANCY. FAS REPRESENTS THE SEVERE END OF THE SPECTRUM OF BIRTH DEFECTS CAUSED BY ALCOHOL.
- \* FETAL ALCOHOL EFFECT (FAE) IS THE TERMINOLOGY USED TO DESCRIBE ABNORMALITIES THAT ARE LESS SEVERE THAN THOSE IN FAS OR THAT ARE PRESENT IN AN INDIVIDUAL WHOSE MOTHER ABUSED ALCOHOL BUT WHO DOES NOT HAVE ALL OF THE FEATURES OF FAS.
- \* MATERNAL ALCOHOL ABUSE IS THE LEADING KNOWN CAUSE OF MENTAL RETARDATION IN THE UNITED STATES.
- \* MANY INDIVIDUALS WITH ALCOHOL-RELATED BIRTH DEFECTS ARE NOT ABLE TO UNDERSTAND CAUSE AND EFFECT RELATIONSHIPS AND LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES.
- \* IN THE US, BETWEEN 2,000 AND 12,000 INFANTS ARE BORN WITH FAS EACH YEAR, AND AS MANY AS 50,000 WITH FAE.
- \* FETAL ALCOHOL SYNDROME AND OTHER ALCOHOL-RELATED BIRTH DEFECTS CANNOT BE CURED. MATERNAL ALCOHOL ABUSE CAUSES PERMANENT DAMAGE.
- \* APPROXIMATELY 1 IN 7 PREGNANT WOMEN DRINKS ALCOHOL AT SOME TIME DURING THEIR PREGNANCY
- \* FAS AND FAE ARE FOUND IN ALL RACES AND SOCIOECONOMIC GROUPS
- \* THE INSTITUTIONAL AND MEDICAL COSTS FOR ONE INDIVIDUAL WITH FAS ARE ESTIMATED TO BE \$1.4 MILLION OVER A LIFETIME
- \* IN THE UNITED STATES, IT IS ESTIMATED THAT EACH YEAR FROM \$75 MILLION TO \$9.7 BILLION IS SPENT TO HELP THOSE WITH FAS
- \* WINE, BEER OR LIQUOR ALL CONTAIN ALCOHOL AND ALL CAN CAUSE DAMAGE TO A DEVELOPING BABY

\* ALCOHOL CAN DAMAGE THE BABY AT ANY STAGE OF ITS DEVELOPMENT

\* SOME OF THE SERIOUS BIRTH DEFECTS THAT ARE CAUSED BY ALCOHOL MAY OCCUR IF THE MOTHER ABUSES ALCOHOL EVEN BEFORE SHE MIGHT REALIZE THAT SHE IS PREGNANT

\* THE PROBABILITY OF HAVING A CHILD WITH FAS INCREASES WITH THE AMOUNT AND FREQUENCY OF ALCOHOL CONSUMED

\* RESEARCHERS CAN LEARN A GREAT DEAL ABOUT THE WAY ALCOHOL DAMAGES EMBRYOS BY STUDYING ANIMAL MODELS OF FAS AND FAE.

\* ALCOHOL KILLS SPECIFIC CELLS IN THE DEVELOPING BRAIN. THE PATTERN OF CELL DEATH AND SUBSEQUENT DEFECTS VARY WITH THE STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT AT THE TIME OF ALCOHOL EXPOSURE

\* THERE IS NO **KNOWN** SAFE AMOUNT OF ALCOHOL THAT A PREGNANT WOMAN CAN DRINK AND NOT RISK DAMAGING HER BABY

\* PREGNANT WOMEN SHOULD NOT DRINK ALCOHOL

\* ALCOHOL-RELATED BIRTH DEFECTS ARE 100% PREVENTABLE IF A PREGNANT WOMAN DOES NOT DRINK ALCOHOL

\* APPROXIMATELY 1 IN 30 PREGNANT WOMEN ENGAGE IN HIGH-RISK DRINKING, DEFINED AS HAVING 5 OR MORE DRINKS IN ONE SETTING, OR 7 OR MORE DRINKS IN A WEEK.