

Woman's Christian Temperance Union

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This letter is primarily for the WCTU sisters in Africa and in Papua New Guinea. Thank you for your patience - you are not forgotten. I have been travelling and attending to family and home matters for more than 6 weeks. So there was no newsletter for the month of July. But there is good news to report:

Friends and Sisters

The British Medical Journal on July 10 published findings of a study which prove there are **no health benefits to drinking alcohol**. There has been considerable debate as to whether or not light to moderate alcohol consumption reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease and stroke. Alcohol is the 5th leading factor for death and disability worldwide. Professor Doug Sellman of Otago University (NZ) says that it is time for the promotion of the supposed benefits of drinking some alcohol, to stop.

Latest Research

Some of you will know the famous comedy actor Robin Williams. He died recently and his death has been associated with **drug and alcohol use**. He suffered with depression and used these dangerous substances to try to help alleviate his sufferings. Alcohol and drugs will never help anyone.

Robin Williams actor died

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Day - September 9 every year. At 9 am we encourage you to ring a bell somewhere and tell people about the dangers of drinking alcohol during pregnancy. No young women should drink alcohol - it can damage the unborn baby permanently. Millions of babies are born damaged and it is totally preventable. Prepare for this day and **give out the attached FAS flier** and speak up.

FAS Day - Sept 9

- Pray every day at noon time for WCTU
- Pray for the young women in your community to drink no alcohol
- Pray for WCTU members in lands with physical and political troubles
- Pray for the WCTU about to take off in Rwanda

Prayer Points

Remember that you are in a mighty ministry with God. So - *'Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.'* Matthew 5:16

Blessings on you - precious women of God.

Very sincerely

Joy Butler

PREVENT FETAL ALCOHOL SYNDROME

There is no safe time or amount to drink during pregnancy!

Alcohol is an agent that causes birth defects (a teratogen). Teratogens have four effects:

- Death (including stillbirth, spontaneous abortion, miscarriage, and death shortly after birth) because the baby is malformed internally
- Severe malformation such as heart defects, cleft-lip and palate, hip displacement, club foot (some of these malformations are treatable)
- Growth deficiency (born smaller and abnormal development)
- Functional deficits - caused by brain disruption, which is the main source of the damage, and one that cannot be corrected

Ways alcohol causes damage in the developing fetus:

- *Excessive cell death* - normally cells grow and die in the developing brain, but alcohol causes an excessive amount of cell death
- *Impaired cell proliferation* - alcohol interferes with normal cell development, which includes growth and division
- *Disruption of cell migrational pattern* - alcohol causes errors to occur in brain development so that a cell that has a particular place to go in the brain may migrate to the wrong location
- *Inhibited nerve growth* - alcohol disrupts the neurotransmitters so messages are unable to get from one area to another

There are times when the fetus is not as susceptible as others. Some women seem not to be as sensitive to alcohol and some fetuses are resistant to the alcohol's effects. But since none of these factors are predictable, the only safe course for the pregnant woman is to refrain from drinking.

Since the central nervous system – which includes the brain – is developing throughout the entire pregnancy, this underlines the fact that there is no safe time or amount to drink during pregnancy.

In the first 3 months of fetal development ... alcohol causes physical damage

In the 2nd trimester ... alcohol increases the risk of spontaneous abortion

And in the last trimester ... alcohol can cause growth deficiency

This is a condensed version of the WCTU Signal Press brochure with title of the same name written by Ann P. Streissguth, PH.D.

PREVENT FETAL ALCOHOL SYNDROME

Studies of FAS children have shown the following results: Poor sucking skills; poor sleep and wake patterns; crying and trembling; neurotransmission delayed; arithmetic is their hardest subject; these children need help with daily living skills - socialization, adaptive behavior and communication.

Alcohol produces dysfunctional families; adults have no goal in life; they have difficulty holding a job; teens experience disruptive school experiences; adults are suicidal; more than 90% FAS individuals have mental health problems.

WHAT IS THE COMMUNITY SOLUTION?

IPIP – Intervention, Prevention, Intervention, Prevention

Each community needs to intervene with high-risk mothers to prevent more alcohol-affected babies. Further, the community needs to intervene with high-risk babies to prevent secondary disabilities.

To solve the problem of alcohol-affected babies women must either be motivated not to drink during pregnancy or, if they can't stop drinking, to avoid pregnancy.

The five P's of prevention are:

- 1. Public Awareness*
- 2. Professional education*
- 3. Provide service from birth to age 3*
- 4. Public policy (everyone can become involved)*
- 5. Parent Power (support groups are important)*

We need communities totally committed to not having any more FAS babies! Continual awareness is required through public service announcements, posted signs about the danger of drinking during pregnancy, and other educational endeavours.

This is the message. FAS is only a small part of alcohol-related disabilities.

FAS lasts a lifetime,

BUT –

FAS is preventable.

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**International FAS Day – in one magic minute
– we can change the world –
September 9 - 9.09 am**

ATTENTION

Medical authorities worldwide state:
Women should NOT drink alcoholic beverages during pregnancy because of the risk of birth defects.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) is:

- The leading cause of mental retardation in the world
- 100% preventable
- The root of numerous social disorders
- Hyperactivity
- Poor judgment
- Immature behavior
- Unemployment and crime

FATAL ALCOHOLIC SYNDROME....

DON'T PASS IT ON TO YOUR BABY

www.wwctu.org