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Fish

Fish is an excellent source of high-quality protein and other nutrients. But the Federal Food and Drug Administration (FDA) advisories, recommends to pregnant women they should **not eat certain fish with high levels of mercury during pregnancy. That includes shark, swordfish, king mackerel and tilefish.** It is okay to eat up to 12 ounces of shrimp, salmon, polluck, and catfish. Albacore tuna also is high in mercury; pregnant women may want to choose canned chunk light tuna instead—although the FDA advises no more than 12 ounces or two 6-ounce cans per week.

Alcohol

When a pregnant woman drinks alcohol, it quickly reaches her fetus. The same amount of alcohol that is in her blood is in her baby's blood. In an adult, the liver breaks down the alcohol. But a baby's liver is not yet able to do this. Thus, alcohol is much more harmful to a fetus than it is to an adult. The more a pregnant woman drinks, the greater the danger to her baby.

It is not known how much alcohol it takes to harm the fetus. All types of drinks pose a risk. It is best not to drink at all during pregnancy.

Drinking at any time during pregnancy can cause problems. Alcohol increases the chance of having a miscarriage or a preterm baby. Alcohol abuse during pregnancy is a leading cause of mental retardation, or Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (a pattern of physical, mental, and behavioral problems in the baby that are thought to be due to alcohol abuse by the mother during pregnancy).

(From ACOG Pamphlet: Tobacco, Alcohol, Drugs and Pregnancy)

Smoking

If a woman smokes when she is pregnant, her baby is exposed to harmful chemicals such as tar, nicotine, and carbon monoxide. Nicotine causes blood vessels to constrict, so less oxygen and nutrients reach the fetus. Carbon monoxide lowers the amount of oxygen the baby receives. Also, women who smoke during pregnancy are more likely to have certain problems:

- An ectopic pregnancy
- Vaginal bleeding
- Problems with the way the placenta attaches to the uterus
- A stillbirth
- A low-birth-weight baby (weighing less than 5 ½ pounds)

Smoking hurts the baby after birth, too. The baby may breathe in harmful amounts of smoke from cigarettes smoked nearby (secondhand smoke). Breathing secondhand smoke increases the risk of asthma and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).

(From ACOG Pamphlet: Tobacco, Alcohol, Drugs and Pregnancy)