



Wellness News

Drugs and Pregnancy

by Connie Brase, MA

It is widely known that drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause your baby to be born with any number of physical and mental defects. In fact, it says so on nearly every bottle of alcohol you buy. Fetal Alcohol Syndrome is the most serious disorder caused by alcohol use, and it is diagnosed when multiple physical and mental signs show up in the newborn baby. These signs indicate the child will have more difficulty with every developmental milestone, such as talking, walking and learning. Although less is known about the effects of drug use during pregnancy, research shows that it also causes developmental problems in children. Some of those problems can be

lying quietly, uninterested in human contact.

The first few years of life are the most critical for proper childhood development. Newborns need eye contact, physical skin-on-skin contact, and sound stimulation to develop positive emotional traits, such as trust. In other words, a parent's job is more than keeping their baby safe and comfortable; babies need to be cuddled, bathed, and talked to in soothing tones. They need singing, holding, rocking and smiling faces gazing into their eyes. All of this is needed for the parent and baby to bond and form a close attachment. Only then will the baby have the ability to trust their surroundings and the people in them

Unfortunately, addicted mothers who used during pregnancy will probably continue to use after the birth. Chances are the father or male caretaker is also using harmful substances. The reason babies cry is to get their needs met; either they need a dry diaper to make them comfortable, or food to ease their hunger, or to be made warmer or cooler. When a parent responds to the cry and meets the baby's needs, the baby will get the bonding and close attachment it needs to develop mentally and socially. However, a baby born addicted to drugs cries very little, not asking for contact of any kind, and can often suffer neglect, resulting in poor mental and social development.

It's a vicious cycle: the babies don't cry, the parents don't give the attention on their own, and the result is children with attachment disorders. Attachment disorders will cause lifelong problems for that child, the parents and family, and the community. The most severe form is called a Reactive Attachment Disorder, which is diagnosed when a child fails to respond emotionally to



its environment. These children don't smile very often, don't respond to comforting, and don't reach out when someone shows interest in them. Many of these children become adults who spend much of their lives in prisons.

There is good news--help is available, and children are resilient. The sooner you quit using, the better chance your child has to bond with you and overcome the effects of maternal drug use. If you or your significant other is pregnant and using, please seek help to quit. Southeast Health Group has trained treatment providers. And don't worry about the cost: there is financial help for treatment specifically for pregnant women, women with dependent children, and IV drug users. Here's to your baby's Mental Wellness!

Call Southeast Health Group at 800.511.5446 for information or to schedule an appointment.

“Babies born to drug-using parents are more likely to suffer from Attachment Disorders”

identified at birth, however others are not recognized until the child goes to school and experiences learning and/or behavioral difficulties. The main problem is that babies born to drug-addicted parents do not bond properly, and are likely to suffer from attachment disorders.

A baby that was exposed to drugs in utero can be born addicted to the same drug used by the mother. If that happens, the baby will go into withdrawal, which causes excruciating pain for the first few days of life, making the baby irritable, with difficulty eating and sleeping. Even if the symptoms are not that severe, the baby will be apathetic and withdrawn,

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