

Alcohol and Other Drug Use in Pregnant Teens

According to information published in the journal *Addictive Behaviors*, many teenagers may not be getting the message about the risks of alcohol and other drugs during pregnancy. The study, published in the Spring 2015 issue of *Addictive Behaviors*, examined the relationship between substance use and teen pregnancy. The study used data from a large, nationally representative sample (National Study on Drug Use and Health, NSDUH) of youths in the United States between 2002 and 2012. The NSDUH sample included 97,850 adolescent girls between the ages of 12 and 17, 810 of whom said that they were pregnant.

Results indicate:

- Nearly 3 in 5 (or 59%) pregnant teens reported having used one or more substances in the previous 12 months
- This rate is reportedly two times as great as that of nonpregnant teens (35%)
- The study also suggests that use of these substances continues during pregnancy for many teens, particularly younger ones
- More than one third (34%) of all pregnant adolescent girls 12-14 reported having used one or more substances during the previous 30 days
- Substance use does decrease dramatically for all pregnant youths as they progress from the first into the second and third trimesters of pregnancy
- The most commonly used substances were:
 - Alcohol (16%)
 - Cannabis (14%)
 - Other illicit drugs (5%)

According to study author, Michael G. Vaughn of Saint Louis University's School of Social Work, "The odds of substance use were roughly 50 percent lower among pregnant teens reporting consistent parental support and limit setting, as well as those who expressed strong positive feelings about going to school. This suggests that it makes sense to engage both parents and teachers in efforts to address substance use among pregnant teens."

For more information on this study, please see the Spring 2015 issue of *Addictive Behaviors*. For further information regarding alcohol and other drug use during pregnancy, please contact Karen Kuehn Howell, Ph.D., at the Center for Maternal Substance Abuse and Child Development, Emory University School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, 12 Executive Park Drive NE, Atlanta, Georgia, 30329. You can also phone us at 404-712-9829 or visit our website at <http://www.emory.edu/MSACD>

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