

Study Finds Women Who Drink Alcohol Before Pregnancy Less Likely To Take Multivitamins

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Researchers from the University of California, San Diego Department of Pediatrics and Rady Children's Hospital-San Diego, a research affiliate of UC San Diego School of Medicine, have found a link between multivitamin use and alcohol consumption before pregnancy, uncovering a need for education about the importance of vitamin supplementation, particularly among women who drink alcohol during their childbearing years. The study was published online this month in *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*.

Researchers examined data collected from the Centers For Disease Control and Prevention's multiple-state Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) of more than 100,000 women between 2004 and 2008. The women answered a series of questions about alcohol use before their pregnancies as well as multivitamin supplement use. The study found women who reported consuming alcohol regularly or binge drinking were significantly less likely to take a multivitamin supplement compared with those who did not report alcohol consumption.

"It's likely a woman may consume alcohol before she even realizes she's pregnant, therefore, these findings are significant," explained Lauren Bartell Weiss, PhD, a postdoctoral research fellow at UC San Diego's Center for the Promotion of Maternal Health and Infant Development and co-author of the study. "If a woman is drinking alcohol regularly and unintentionally becomes pregnant, not only does her unborn child have a greater risk of being affected by the alcohol, but other studies suggest that alcohol can also alter the metabolism of nutrients and interfere with the nutritional supply to the developing baby."

Since pregnancy increases the demand for several vitamins and minerals in order to adequately support a developing fetus, Weiss said the alcohol interference with nutritional supply means a woman's unborn child may also have a greater risk of developing other birth defects, such as neural tube defects, if she hasn't been taking a multi-vitamin.

"These findings emphasize the need for educating all women of childbearing age, especially those who drink alcohol, about the importance of taking multivitamins regularly whether they're planning to have children or not," said Weiss.

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