

Center for Behavioral Health Studies



RIMROCK FOUNDATION

COMMUNITY BULLETIN

Substance Use Among Pregnant Women: A Major Health Concern

The Reproductive Years

Alcohol and other drug use has major effects on female reproductive chemistry at several stages of life.

New research suggests that the growth spurts and normal progression of puberty may be at risk in adolescents who consume even moderate amounts of alcohol on a regular basis.

Some of the consequences associated with women's alcohol abuse range from infertility and increased risks for spontaneous abortion, to impaired fetal growth and development.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

Maternal alcohol use during pregnancy contributes to a wide range of effects on children.

These problems can include hyperactivity and attention problems, learning and memory deficits, as well as problems associated with social development. The most serious

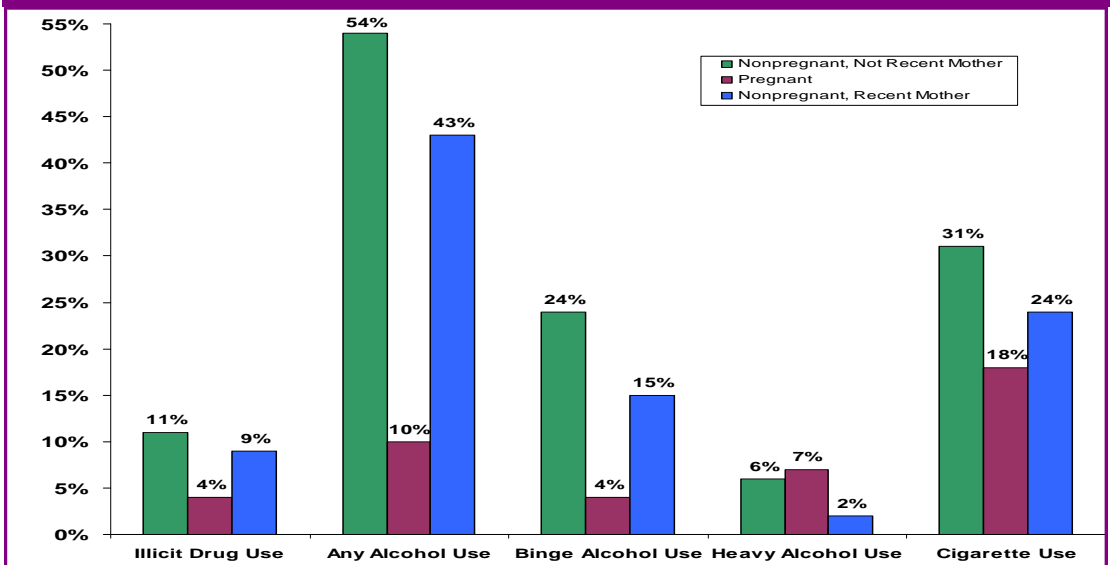
consequence of maternal drinking during pregnancy is fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS). Children with FAS have a distinctive set of facial anomalies, growth retardation, and significant learning and/or behavioral problems.

Even children prenatally exposed to lower levels of alcohol can have extensive learning and behavioral issues.

New research from the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) shows that over 4 percent of pregnant women age 15 to 44 reported illicit drug use during the past month. (Please see Exhibit). This report also shows pregnant women age 15 to 25 were more likely to use illicit drugs than pregnant women age 26 to 44.

"We know that substance use by pregnant women is a leading cause of mental, physical, and psychological problems in infants and children," reports Rimrock Foundation's Chief Operations Officer, Mona Sumner.

Pregnant Women Ages 15 to 44 Reporting Drug Use: 2002 and 2003



Summary

In the 15 to 44 age group, the rates of past month illicit drug, alcohol, and cigarette use were lower among pregnant women. Among non-pregnant women, substance use rates were lower for recent mothers than for women who were not recent mothers.

Among pregnant women in the 15 to 44 age group, 9.8 percent reported

drinking alcohol during the past month, 4.1 percent reported binge alcohol use.

The U.S. Surgeon General recommends that women should abstain from drinking all alcohol during pregnancy as the safest course of action.

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