Good news about pregnancy and drinking

By ACSH Staff — September 19, 2012

If you’re pregnant or even contemplating it I’m sure you’ve heard the mantra about drinking: Just Say No. Everyone knows that there’s no amount of alcohol you can safely imbibe if you’re pregnant. Right?

Well, in a word, no. While many studies document a seriously increased risk of various malformations among newborns of women who binged on booze while pregnant, the consensus of scientific studies shows pretty convincingly that modest amounts of alcohol pose no significant increased risk to the fetus. Surprise!

In the last two years of the 20th century, large British and Canadian studies showed (separately) that one drink daily, or less, during the first trimester resulted in no increased risk of so-called fetal-alcohol syndrome, (FAS), a constellation of malformations generally linked to excessive alcohol use in pregnancy [2].

More recently, another study from the UK found no problems among over 11,000 children (studied at age 5) of mothers who drank lightly, or moderately (up to 8 drinks per week).

And the icing on the cake, so to speak, comes from an Australian study published in 2010 which seemed to show that infants and toddlers of light-drinking moms actually had generally better health parameters than did abstainers offspring.

The basis for the No drink for you! myth probably derives from studies of heavy drinkers, whose offspring did indeed have a high risk of FAS. Trouble is, you can’t just extrapolate from heavy exposure problems down to light use science just doesn’t work that way. Pregnant women do tend to be hyper-cautious about, well, everything. So if someone anyone hints at some toxin to avoid, well fuggedaboudit! It’s toast.

But really, don’t women with child have enough real problems to worry about, without having to deal with them all stone sober? Moreover, about half of all pregnancies are unplanned, so it s
highly likely that many pregnancies are well underway while the unsuspecting woman has been drinking as usual during those early weeks. Now there’s no reason to feel concerned, or worse, guilty about that normal behavior.

My organization, the American Council on Science and Health, covered this subject pretty comprehensively at the time those studies came out: our mantra is to correct health and science mis-information whenever we come upon it.

This is a perfect example.

"Good news about pregnancy and drinking" [6] (Examiner.com)