

FETUS

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facial features and central nervous system damage.

These children have a lower IQ, learning and memory difficulty, hyperactivity and motor control damage. When children become older they are vulnerable and easily persuaded.

Central nervous system damage may occur any time during the pregnancy, but abnormal facial features develop during the first trimester only.

"Many children can have central nervous system damage without the abnormal facial features," West said.

An estimated 7,000 to 8,000 children are born with fetal alcohol syndrome each year.

"This could be the tip of the iceberg," West said. "There may be a lot more."

Further studies have shown that during the third trimester of pregnancy, when the infant's brain develops, the combination of alcohol with other drugs can be especially harmful.

"Putting all these factors together, we can say it is hard to figure what the effect of alcohol is going to be," he said. "Because of that, it is better if women refrain from drinking alcohol completely."

West said some fetal alcohol syndrome issues have not yet been re-

solved. He said particular times during gestation where exposure to alcohol are particularly harmful need to be studied.

Dr. Linda Band, a research assistant in the College of Medicine, said she hopes the research she is doing with West will be a foundation for future research.

"I am particularly interested in how alcohol affects the immune system," Band said. "Children subjected to alcohol during the early stages tend to have a

long lasting abnormal immune system. The fetal alcohol syndrome studies are done on animals, mostly rats.

"The reason for that is, while we know that fetal alcohol syndrome happens in the human population, you can't take a pregnant woman to drink certain amounts of alcohol at particular times for practical and ethical reasons," West said.

West said all mammals go through the same stages in development, so animal data is substantial.



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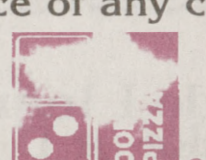
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