

## COMPLICATIONS OF PREGNANCY

### EFFECTS OF DRINKING ALCOHOL

Alcohol passes through the placenta quickly, so a fetus is affected by a drink almost as quickly as the woman. Alcohol can damage unborn babies severely; even infrequent drinking can have devastating effects on the developing infant. Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, identified in 1976, is one effect of maternal drinking. The effects of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome include:

1. Growth deficiencies before birth.
2. Facial irregularities (narrow eyes and short upturned noses), small heads and hearts, joint and limb defects.
3. Mental retardation.
4. Jittery and poorly coordinated.
5. Short attention spans and mental problems.
6. Behavioral problems.

### EFFECTS OF DRUGS

Any drug that a woman takes passes through the placenta into the bloodstream of the fetus. Even drugs that have been prescribed by a doctor could be harmful to a developing baby. No medication or drugs of any kind should be taken without physician approval. They can cause malformations, convulsions, tremors, breathing difficulties, incomplete growth, retardation, spine and bone deformities, and chromosome damage. Babies must experience the effects of withdrawal shortly after birth.

### Rh FACTOR

Rh factor is only a problem among mothers who have Rh negative blood. If the baby she is carrying has Rh positive blood, then the mother's body will develop antibodies that destroy the red blood cells of the baby. This becomes a problem with the second baby the mother gives birth to because the mother's body does not develop many antibodies in the first pregnancy. When a physician treats a mother who is Rh-, he/she will give her a shot to neutralize any Rh+ blood cells that may have passed into the mother's bloodstream to prevent the antibodies from being formed. After the birth of each positive baby, the shot, Roghamm, must be given.