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Researchers in **Norway** found that **negative affectivity is linked to light alcohol use and binge drinking during pregnancy**. Results published in *Acta Obstetricia et Gynecologica Scandinavica*, a journal of the Nordic Federation of Societies of Obstetrics and Gynecology, show 16% of women had light alcohol use in the first trimester and 10% in the second trimester. Binge drinking occurred in 12% of women during their first trimester and 0.5% in the second trimester.

Experts describe negative affectivity as the tendency to experience negative emotions such as anxiety and depression. Individuals with negative affectivity tend to have an unfavorable view of themselves and the world in general. Previous studies have associated negative affectivity with greater vulnerability to stress, intense emotional reactions to daily life, and inclination to use intoxicants in response to stress.

Mothers who use alcohol while pregnant place their unborn child at risk for premature birth, low birthweight, fetal alcohol syndrome and even fetal death. These serious health risks have led health

experts around the world to recommend that women abstain from alcohol while trying to conceive and during pregnancy. Yet prior evidence indicates that 25% to 50% of women report drinking alcohol while pregnant, with low income level, partner's drinking behavior, and mother's pre-pregnancy alcohol use all contributing risk factors.

The present population-based study, led by Dr. Kim Stene-Larsen from the Norwegian Institute of Public Health in Oslo, Norway, used data from 66,111 pregnant women and their partners who were part of the Norwegian Mother and Child Cohort Study (MoBa). Mothers filled out surveys related to alcohol use at 17 and 30 weeks of gestation.

The Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test-Consumption (AUDIT-C) was used in the present study to measure light alcohol use (0.5 to 2 units, 1-4 times per month) and binge drinking

(intake of 5 alcohol units or more in a single drinking episode). In Norway one unit of alcohol is equivalent to “one glass (1/3 liter or 11 oz) of beer, one sherry glass of fortified wine, or one snaps (shot) glass of spirit or liqueur.”

Negative affectivity was assessed in gestational weeks 17 and 30 using the Hopkins Symptom Checklist, which measures anxiety and depression. Medical evidence has established that measures of anxiety and depression symptoms are comparable to negative affectivity measures.

Findings indicate that with each unit increase in maternal negative affectivity, the odds for light alcohol increased in the first and second trimester, 27% and 28%, respectively. The odds for binge drinking were much higher at 55% in the first trimester and 114% in the second trimester for each unit increase of negative affectivity in the mother.

"Our findings clearly show a link between a mother's negative emotions, such as depression and anxiety, and light alcohol use and binge drinking during pregnancy," concludes Dr. Stene-Larsen. "Further study is needed to understand why women continue to drink alcohol while pregnant despite health warnings."