Alcohol and Pregnancy Don't Mix

Teratogens are substances or conditions known to disrupt fetal development. Alcohol is a powerful teratogen that especially targets the brain, causing a range of both structural and functional birth defects. The disabilities caused by alcohol exposure during pregnancy are called Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD).

STRUCTURAL BIRTH DEFECTS CAUSED BY ALCOHOL

Structural birth defects are abnormalities in how the body part is put together. Alcohol's main target is the brain but it can affect all organ systems. Examples include small brain size, distinctive facial features, joint problems, eye muscle and heart defects.

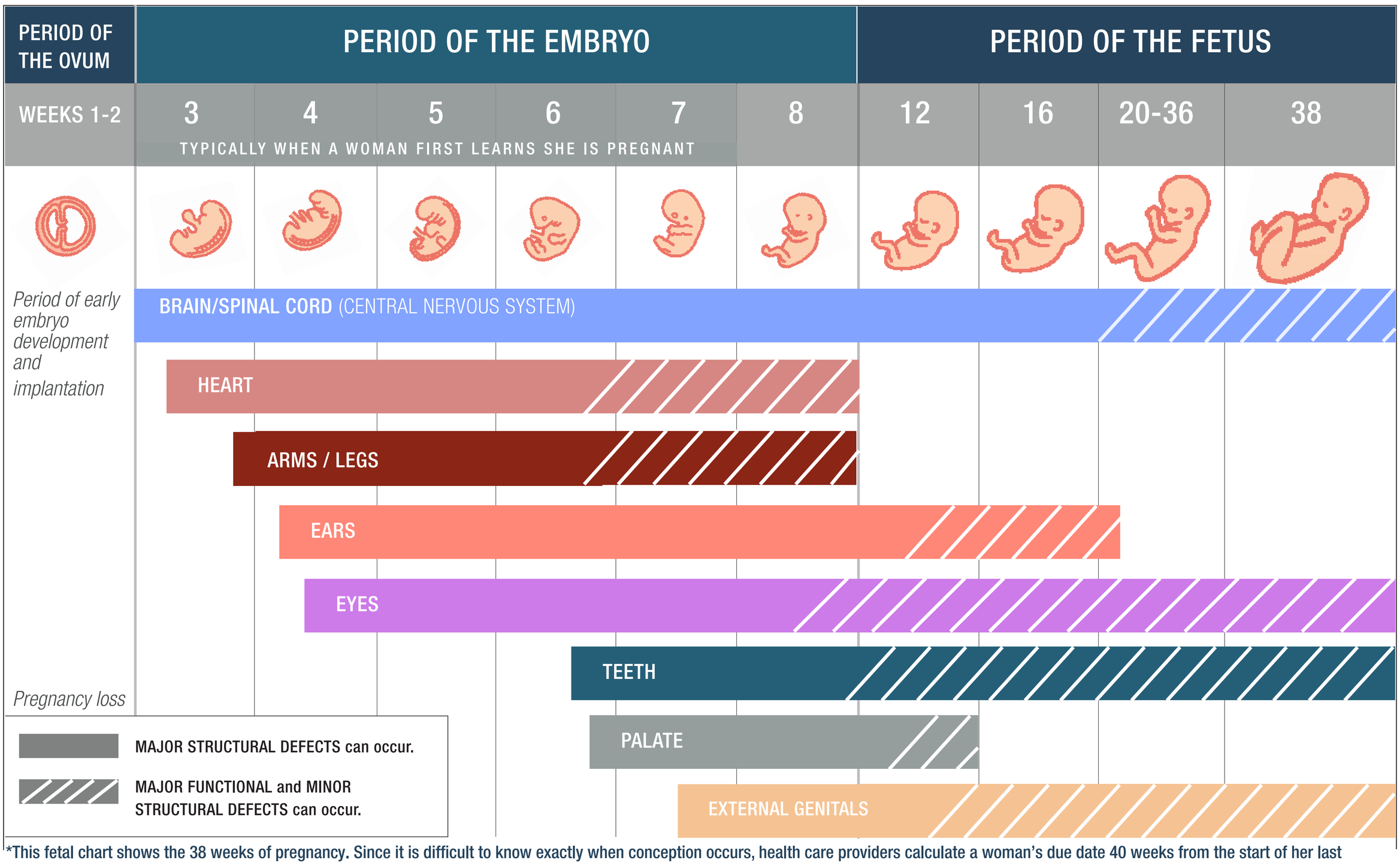
FUNCTIONAL BIRTH DEFECTS CAUSED BY ALCOHOL

Functional birth defects are problems in how a body system works. Alcohol is particularly damaging to brain function, causing difficulty with learning, memory, and attention; speech and language delays; poor reasoning and judgement skills; and poor social skills.

FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDERS DEFINED

A range of life-long physical, intellectual, learning and behavioral disabilities caused by prenatal exposure to alcohol. Affected individuals have mild to severe challenges meeting developmental milestones at home, in school, at work and in society.

THIS CHART SHOWS THAT BRAIN DEVELOPMENT CAN BE AFFECTED BY ALCOHOL AT ANY TIME DURING PREGNANCY



*This fetal chart shows the 38 weeks of pregnancy. Since it is difficult to know exactly when conception occurs, health care providers calculate a woman's due date 40 weeks from the start of her last menstrual cycle. Adapted from Moore, 1993 and the National Organization of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (NOFAS) 2009.

For more information, please visit www.cdc.gov/fasd

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Collaborative for Alcohol-Free Pregnancy — Partnering for Practice Change

NPWH Nurse Practitioners in Women's Health — Caring for Women

AWHONN Promoting the Health of Women and Newborns

American College of Nurse-Midwives