

Effects of Teratogens on a Fetus :

Any substance dissolved in mom's blood can diffuse across the placenta, exposing her fetus to it. During the first nine weeks of pregnancy, the fetus is highly susceptible to the effects of things in its environment. At this time, all major organs are forming, and exposure now could have serious life long effects.

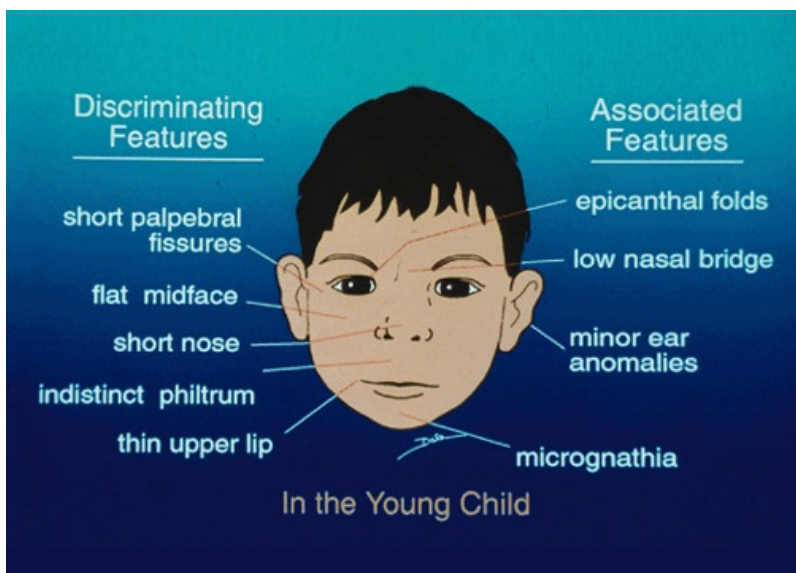
A “**teratogen**” is anything that can cause a structural defect in the fetus. You need to know about 3 in particular.....

Cigarette smoke -

Causes “vasoconstriction” - a narrowing of the blood vessels of moms endometrium. Less oxygen and nutrition is delivered to the fetus. Babies are usually smaller and lighter than average, and are more likely to suffer from respiratory problems.

Alcohol -

Affects the development of the brain and its functioning. Causes Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).....may include facial deformities, mental disability, and personality / behavioural disorders.



Prescribed drugs -

Famous ex..... "thalidomide"



Prescribed to pregnant women in the 50s to deal with morning sickness symptoms. Babies were born with missing or deformed arms and legs.

Other known teratogens include :

- radiation (X rays, or nuclear fallout as seen in Japan at the end of WWII after atomic bomb blasts)
- mercury and lead in our environment
- PCB's as part of some types of electrical equipment