



## Alcohol more harmful for women

(By Harleen Kaur) Alcohol in any amount can be dangerous to anyone but it affects women more than men, with increased health risks like liver and heart diseases and infertility for them, according to experts.

According to a senior hematologist with Fortis Hospital, "the female physiology is such that it allows for greater toxicity with lesser amounts of alcohol and in lesser time, as compared to males."

"A woman's body doesn't break down the alcohol as quickly as a man's body does. This results in greater levels of alcohol in blood, resulting in greater toxicity. The enzyme, alcohol dehydrogenase (ADH) which breaks down the alcohol in stomach is produced in smaller quantities in women resulting in slower action as compared to men," Jain added.

According to a publication by the US National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), women who drink heavily face greater health risks than men who drink heavily, with women alcoholics being more prone to liver disease, heart damage and brain damage.

Amongst the other problems, the report claims, chronic heavy drinking can lead to menstrual problems, infertility, and early menopause while drinking during

adolescence can interfere with puberty, growth, and bone health.

But the most vulnerable are the pregnant women who drink because in their case, even the unborn child is at risk from alcohol, which is a teratogen, a substance that can harm a foetus.

"Alcohol consumption by pregnant women can induce problems like Fetal Alcohol Disorder (FAD) and Abruption, a gynecologist and director of Isis hospital,

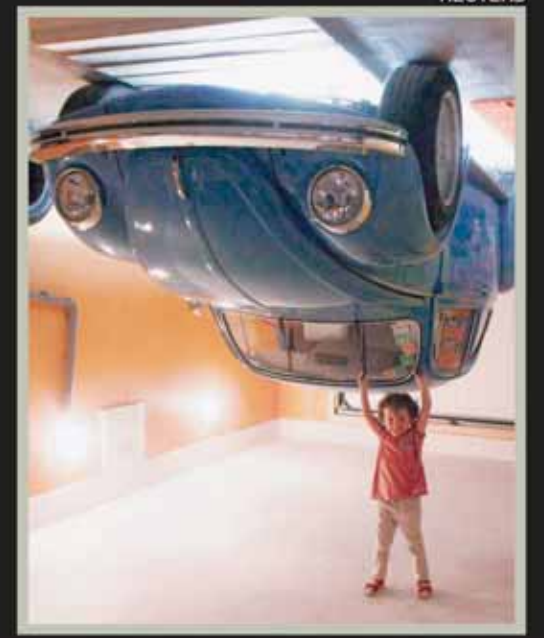
"FAD is a major problem with ill-effects ranging from mental retardation to delayed physical growth. Any amount of alcohol consumed by an expecting mother is enough to harm the unborn child. And then there is abruption, which means premature detachment of the placenta," she added. "The women are more vulnerable to alcohol because of increased percentage of fat as well as estrogen, which delays alcohol breakdown and increases alcohol toxicity in women," said Gour.

However, the damage is not just physical.

Beyond the physiological ill-effects, the NIAAA report claims heavy drinking can make a woman more vulnerable to violence, including sexual assault and they are twice as likely as men to die from alcohol-related causes such as suicide, accidents, and illnesses

# A HOUSE GONE HEAD OVER HEELS

REUTERS



**THE UPSIDE-DOWN WORLD:** A woman walks past the facade of the 'Upside-down house' built by Polish architects Irek Glowacki and Marek Rozanski in an Austrian village; (above) a child in the garage of the house where a car hangs over his head; (below) the bathroom of the house.

HAVE you ever walked into a house where the floor, furniture, wash basin and everything else hangs above your head defying the law of gravity? Two Polish architects have spent eight months building a "house upside-down" in the western Austrian village of Terfens-

Vomperbach, Tyrol. Irek Glowacki and Marek Rozanski's idea seemed a little crazy but the result doesn't look that bad at all.

The project is meant to serve as a new tourist attraction in the area and is now open for public viewing.



## Chen Guangcheng says China tightens curbs on his family

Chinese authorities appear to have increased pressure on the family of blind activist Chen Guangcheng, who fled house arrest last month and spent six days in the US embassy. The activist has fears about the safety of his family in his home province. Mr Chen's nephew is suspected of attempted murder after injuring three men with a kitchen knife who broke into his house, his lawyer says. His brother and sister-in-law also appear

to be under house arrest. The activist, who hopes to go to the US with his wife and children to study, told the BBC he fears that retribution against him has begun. He is currently in hospital in Beijing awaiting the completion of paperwork to allow him to leave for America, but he has limited information about what is happening in his home province of Shandong. If he goes, it would be the end of an affair that at one point threat-

ened to become a major diplomatic incident between China and the United States, says the BBC's Michael Bristow in Beijing. Family 'threatened' But the activist has expressed concerns about the large family he leaves behind in Shandong province. "I'm worried about my family's situation right now. I think the local government in Shangdong has started their revenge against me," Mr Chen told the BBC Chinese service on the phone from his hospital bed.

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