maternal drinking (Niccols, 1994). It is a leading cause of mental retardation and is also associated with facial deformities such as a flattened nose, an underdeveloped upper jaw, and widely spaced eyes (Greenhouse, 2000; Wood, Vinson, & Sher, 2001). Though FAS is more likely to occur with heavy maternal drinking, there is no established safe limit for alcohol use in pregnancy. FAS may occur in babies whose mothers drink as little as two ounces of alcohol a day during the first trimester. Any drug used during pregnancy, whether legal or illegal (illicit), or any medication, whether prescribed or bought over the counter, is potentially harmful to the fetus. Pregnant women need to consult with their obstetricians before using any type of substance, including common pain relievers such as aspirin.

**Prenatal Testing**

Various methods are used to detect fetal abnormalities during prenatal development. In **amniocentesis**, generally performed between weeks sixteen and eighteen of pregnancy, a syringe is inserted into the amniotic sac and fluid containing fetal cells is extracted (Brody, 2001a). The fetal cells are cultured and then analyzed for biochemical and chromosomal abnormalities. Another technique, **chorionic villus sampling (CVS)**, may be performed several weeks earlier than

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**amniocentesis** A technique for diagnosing fetal abnormalities involving examination of extracted fetal cells.

**chorionic villus sampling (CVS)** A technique of detecting fetal abnormalities that involves examination of fetal material extracted from the chorion.