

# how to contact us

You cannot change the brain damage that has already occurred because of alcohol use during pregnancy. However, many individuals with FASD can lead very successful and productive lives with the right support and services. People with FASD and their families have indicated that these approaches have helped improve their daily living skills and long-term success:

- Seek a diagnosis from an FASD Diagnostic Clinic. Insight into the individual's strengths and challenges helps everyone understand what type of programs, training and support is needed.
- Connect with other individuals and families living with FASD. Call MOFAS or visit the MOFAS website to learn about programs available for individuals, families and providers.
- Develop realistic expectations about school and work success.
- Keep communication concrete and consistent. Use repetition and routines to create stability in daily life. This will decrease anxiety and help individuals with FASD learn.
- It is important to keep things as simple and specific as possible when working with children and adults with FASD. Don't use abstract phrases and generalizations. Step-by-step instructions are the most effective.
- An individual with FASD can be successful when provided the appropriate structure.
- Many children with FASD need constant supervision. Teens and adults often need extra help with time and money management as well.

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## FASD 101 what are fetal alcohol spectrum disorders?

educational information from  
the minnesota organization  
on fetal alcohol syndrome

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome is 100% preventable.  
Simply don't drink during pregnancy.

# what is FASD?

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) is a term used to describe a group of birth defects that can result when a woman drinks alcohol while pregnant. There are many terms under the FASD umbrella, including these medical diagnoses:

- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS)
- Alcohol Related Neuro-developmental Disorders (ARND)
- Partial Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (pFAS)

There are many other terms that may be used to indicate a diagnosis as well.

FASD is a lifetime disability that affects each person differently. FASD can include physical, mental and behavioral defects. Some people with FASD have specific facial features and tend to be smaller in height and weight. They often have a brain injury that never goes away. This means both the person's thought process and behavior may be very different from a person who was not exposed to alcohol before birth. The brain damage is the most challenging part of FASD.

FASD is 100% preventable if women do not drink alcohol during pregnancy.

# what causes FASD?

The only cause of FASD is alcohol use during pregnancy. Simply put, when a pregnant woman drinks, her unborn baby drinks. We now know that no amount of alcohol consumption is safe during pregnancy. The type of alcohol (beer, wine, hard liquor, etc.) does not seem to make a difference in terms of its effects on an unborn baby. Since a baby is growing throughout the entire pregnancy, it is never too late to stop drinking.

Drinking alcohol up to the 13th week of pregnancy can cause:

- severe brain damage
- problems with the heart, liver and kidneys
- miscarriage
- facial malformations

Drinking alcohol between weeks 14 and 26 can cause:

- brain damage
- miscarriage
- damaged muscles, skin, teeth, glands and bones

Drinking alcohol between weeks 27 and 40 can cause:

- brain and lung damage
- low birthweight
- early labor and delivery

from the *Guidelines of Care for Children with Special Health Care Needs*, Minnesota Department of Health, 1999

# symptoms of FASD in...

## **Infants:**

Low birthweight; sensitivity to light, noise and touch; irritability, inability to suck effectively, slow development, ear infections.

## **Toddlers:**

Poor memory, hyperactivity, no fear or sense of boundaries, need for lots of physical contact.

## **School-Age Children:**

Easily distracted, short attention span, poor coordination, trouble with both large and fine motor skills, need lots of one-on-one attention.

## **Older Children:**

Low self-esteem, trouble keeping up in school, poor impulse control, difficulty with social boundaries and more.

# diagnosis

If you or someone you know suspects prenatal alcohol use, one of the most important steps you can take is to seek an evaluation from an FASD diagnostic clinic.

FASD is diagnosed by assessing four areas:

- 1 brain function and structure
- 2 facial features
- 3 growth issues
- 4 prenatal alcohol history

Call MOFAS for a list of FASD diagnostic clinics.