

FASD *Tip Sheets*

Information about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder



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What is Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)?

Alcohol can hurt the brain and body of an unborn baby. People born with brain damage may have FASD. FASD stands for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

Are there any other names for FASD?

Yes. But these names refer to specific problems that are included in FASD.

FAS or FAE are often used a lot to describe problems caused by brain damage when a mother drank before her baby was born. FAS stands for Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. FAE stands for Fetal Alcohol Effect. You may also see Partial FAS. It is the same as FAE.

Another term that you may see is ARBD. This stands for Alcohol Related Birth Defect. ARBD refers to brain damage caused by alcohol before a person was born.

You may also see the term ARND. It stands for Alcohol Related Neurodevelopmental Disorder. ARND refers to any developmental problems a person has because their brain was damaged by alcohol before they were born.

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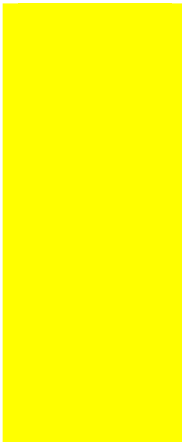
Can FASD be cured?

There is no cure for FASD. The brain damage to an unborn baby that is caused when a mother drinks is permanent. There is no way to fix that brain damage.



Is it alright to drink a little bit when you are pregnant?

No. We do not know how much drinking will hurt an unborn baby. It is safest not to have anything at all to drink if you are going to have a baby. It is also best not to drink if you are planning to have a baby.

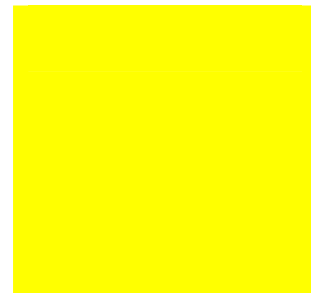


Is it alright if I just drink beer?

No. A drink is a drink. There is the same amount of alcohol in normal servings of beer, wine, liquor or coolers. The alcohol in any of these drinks could hurt an unborn baby.

How many people in Canada are born with FASD?

We do not know. But, we do know that in places where people drink a lot of alcohol, it is more common for children to be born with FASD.



FASD is the most common preventable birth defect. It is also the most common reason for a child's development and learning to be affected.

FASD is 100% preventable. Drinking alcohol is the only cause.

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What kind of problems does a person with FASD have?

There are many different problems caused by FASD. Some people may have just one or two problems. Other people may have many of the problems listed below. Sometimes, the types of problems a person with FASD have change as they get older. It is important to remember that people who do not have FASD may have many of the problems listed below. But, these problems are common in people who have FASD.

Babies and Children with FASD

Here are some of the problems that babies and young children with FASD may have.

- Babies may be born very tiny and stay quite small.
- Babies with FASD may not develop as quickly as children who do not have FASD.
- Babies and young children may have problems sleeping at night.
- Young children may have a lot of trouble paying attention.
- Young children may have trouble speaking well. They may also have trouble learning how to read.
- Young children may have trouble learning at school.
- Young children may have a lot of trouble when things in their lives change.
- Young children may be impulsive. This means that they act without thinking.

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Kids in Elementary School with FASD

Here are some of the problems that kids between 6 and 11 years old, with FASD, may have. As well, many of the problems they had when they were younger may continue.

- They may have trouble learning in school.
- They may have trouble learning from their mistakes. They may repeat the same mistake over and over.
- They may not fit well into groups and may have trouble making friends.

Teenagers and Adults with FASD

Teenagers and adults may also have problems because of FASD. Some problems are caused because of problems they had when they were growing up with FASD. Others are new problems that happen when they leave school or try to get a job. Here are some of the problems that teenagers and adults have because of their FASD:

- Teenagers may have problems completing school.
- Adults may have problems finding a job.
- Some teenagers and adults break the law because they have problems learning from their mistakes.
- Some teenagers and adults may have problems with being addicted to alcohol or other drugs.

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Do people with FASD have any other health problems?

Some people with FASD also have other health problems that are linked with their FASD. Mental health problems can be a problem for some people with FASD. Some people born with FASD have heart, bone, kidney, eye or hearing problems.

How can I tell if my child has FASD?

If you think your child has FASD, it is important for you to talk to your family doctor or someone who knows about the resources in your community. They will probably refer you to a doctor who is specially trained to diagnose FASD.

Many people will help the specially trained doctor find out if your child has FASD. Some of these people include:

- Neuro-psychologists
- Nurses
- Teachers
- Mental health professionals
- Physical therapists
- Occupational therapists
- Speech therapists

These people look for many different things. If you are the birth mother of your child, they will also ask if you drank when you were pregnant.

The most important thing is to find out what type of help your child needs to be successful and happy.

I think I have FASD. What do I do?

You should speak to your family doctor. Your family doctor can also send you for testing for FASD.

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I feel really guilty because I drank a lot when I was pregnant. I am pretty sure my child has FASD.

It is very hard to learn that you might have done something to injure a person you love. Many people do not realize that drinking alcohol can hurt an unborn baby. Talk to your family doctor about your feelings. Your family doctor can also make sure you get the support you need as a parent of a child with FASD. You may also want to speak with other mothers who are feeling the same way you are. You are not alone.

Before I knew I was pregnant, I got drunk. I am really worried about my baby. What should I do?

The possible damage to your unborn child will depend on many things. They include how much and how often you drank and how far along you were in your pregnancy.

If you are pregnant now, the most important thing you can do is to stop drinking any alcohol. It is not too late to help your baby. If you need help to stop drinking, contact your local AADAC office or other support group.

As well, talk to your family doctor. That way, both you and your doctor can watch your baby to see if there are any early signs of FASD.

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Where can people who want more information about FASD go for help?

We are learning more and more about FASD. There are also more people and groups who can provide information and support.

Talk to some of the following people if you need help:

- Your family doctor
- Your local AADAC office
- Your local mental health clinic
- The Lakeland Centre for FASD (1-877-594-5454)
- Your local Child and Family Services Authority

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Is there a list of FASD experts in the province?

The Alberta Children's Services Web Site has a list of FASD experts and resources. You may access this list on the Internet at www.child.gov.ab.ca. Go to the FASD part of the site and follow the links. You may also contact Alberta Children's Services for more information:

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