



FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDERS (FASD)

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASDs) are a group of conditions that can occur in a person whose mother drank alcohol during pregnancy. These effects can include physical problems and problems with behavior and learning. Often, a person with an FASD has a mix of these problems.

Cause and Prevention

FASDs are caused by a woman drinking alcohol during pregnancy. There is **no** known amount of alcohol that is safe to drink while pregnant. There is also **no** safe time to drink during pregnancy and **no** safe kind of alcohol to drink while pregnant. Heavy drinking during pregnancy can lead to spontaneous abortion or a range of disabilities known as fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, of which fetal alcohol syndrome is the most severe.

To prevent FASDs, a woman should not drink alcohol while she is pregnant, or even when she might get pregnant. This is because a woman could get pregnant and not know for several weeks or more. Many pregnancies are unplanned and so it is better to avoid drinking alcohol.

There is no cure. Treatment is focused on mental health and medical services to manage the resulting lifelong disabilities that include learning difficulties, behavioral problems, language, delayed social or motor skills, impaired memory and attention deficits.

Signs and Symptoms

FASDs refer to the whole range of effects that can happen to a person whose mother drank alcohol during pregnancy. These conditions can affect each person in different ways, and can range from mild to severe.

A person with an FASD might have:

- Abnormal facial features, such as a smooth ridge between the nose and upper lip (this ridge is called the philtrum)
- Small head size
- Shorter-than-average height
- Low body weight
- Poor coordination

- Hyperactive behavior
- Difficulty paying attention
- Poor memory
- Difficulty in school (especially with math)
- Learning disabilities
- Speech and language delays
- Intellectual disability or low IQ
- Poor reasoning and judgment skills
- Sleep and sucking problems as a baby
- Vision or hearing problems
- Problems with the heart, kidneys, or bones

Types of FASDs

Different terms are used to describe FASDs, depending on the type of symptoms.

- **Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS):** FAS represents the severe end of the FASD spectrum. Fetal death is the most extreme outcome from drinking alcohol during pregnancy. People with FAS might have abnormal facial features, growth problems, and central nervous system (CNS) problems. People with FAS can have problems with learning, memory, attention span, communication, vision, or hearing. They might have a mix of these problems. People with FAS often have a hard time in school and trouble getting along with others.
- **Alcohol-Related Neurodevelopmental Disorder (ARND):** People with ARND might have intellectual disabilities and problems with behavior and learning. They might do poorly in school and have difficulties with math, memory, attention, judgment, and poor impulse control.
- **Alcohol-Related Birth Defects (ARBD):** People with ARBD might have problems with the heart, kidneys, or bones or with hearing. They might have a mix of these.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder is entirely preventable and avoidable. It is not worth living with regrets for one's entire life when one had the choice. Let us work together to spread information and awareness amongst women and families that they undertake the responsibility not to drink alcohol or use any kind of drugs or psychotropic substances.

Source: <http://www.ncadd.org>