

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders

FASDs are the leading known cause of learning disabilities. However most individuals with FASDs have normal intelligence.

FASDs also cause social and behavioural problems.

There is no proven safe amount and no proven safe time for alcohol in pregnancy.

Alcohol causes more damage to baby than any other drug.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders can be 100% preventable.



What are FASDs?

- Facial abnormalities? Sometimes
- Learning difficulties? Sometimes
- Brain dysfunction? **ALWAYS**

FASDs - an umbrella term describing the range of effects that can occur in a person prenatally exposed to alcohol.

These **lifelong** effects may include physical, psychological, psychiatric, behavioural and learning disabilities.

The term FASD is not a clinical diagnosis. it refers to conditions such as

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) is the rarest of the conditions

Partial Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (pFAS)

Alcohol-Related Neurodevelopmental Disorder (ARND)

Alcohol-Related Birth Defects (ARBD)

Alcohol is a teratogen.

A teratogen is a substance or virus that interferes with the normal development of the fetus.

Alcohol is also a neurobehavioural teratogen which causes damage to the **fetal brain** and can subsequently change behaviour.

Alcohol causes central nervous system damage (CNS) at a lower dose than is necessary to cause any physical malformation to the fetus.

A baby with no physical signs of prenatal alcohol exposure at birth may still have CNS damage that won't be noticeable until the child is older.

Outcomes that may occur with prenatal alcohol exposure:

- miscarriage
- premature delivery
- stillbirth
- malformations
- growth deficiency
- central nervous system dysfunction

What happens?

All alcohol passes through the placenta to the fetus when a pregnant woman drinks. Within minutes the baby's blood alcohol level reaches that of the mother but lasts longer for and does more damage to the baby.

Alcohol can damage the baby throughout the entire pregnancy.

During the first trimester of pregnancy, exposure to alcohol can cause abnormalities in the physical structure of the fetus and the brain.

In the third trimester, the baby's length and weight increase dramatically and exposure to alcohol can impair the growth.

The brain develops and is vulnerable to damage during the **entire pregnancy**. Behaviour problems and cognitive deficits, are the most debilitating effects of prenatal alcohol exposure.