

[Fetal alcohol syndrome in adulthood. A long-term study].

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**Transliterated Title:** Alkoholembyopathie im Erwachsenenalter. Eine Langzeituntersuchung.

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**MeSH Terms:** **Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders/\*diagnosis**  
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**Abstract:** **Background and Objective:** Maternal alcohol addiction in pregnancy causes fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) and fetal alcohol effects (FAE) in children. At present, little is known about the physical, mental, and social long-term consequences in adulthood.

**Patients and Methods:** Since 1974, 52 children with FAS and FAE, all born to alcohol dependent mothers, were prospectively followed up from birth to adulthood. Height, weight and head circumferences were based on percentile standards; mental and school development were assessed by school reports and by intelligence subtests. By structural interviews, occupational and social follow-up were assessed.

**Results:** Growth retardation continued mainly in severely affected adults with underweight in 26%, underheight in 30%, and microcephaly in 46%. They mostly lived in foster families, only 6/52 were able to live independently. In 56% special schools for handicapped and mentally disabled were attended. In most cases (37/52), simple occupations without vocational training were practised.

**Conclusions:** It is mainly the neurotoxic effects of alcohol in pregnancy that have longlasting developmental significance in adults. Because of the dysmorphic changes over time, it is difficult to diagnose FAS and FAE only in adulthood.

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