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Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders

Also called: FASD

Alcohol can harm your baby at any stage during a pregnancy. That includes the earliest stages, before you even know you are pregnant. **Drinking during pregnancy** [<https://medlineplus.gov/pregnancyandsubstanceuse.html>] can cause a group of conditions called fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs). Children who are born with FASD can have a mix of problems, such as medical, behavioral, educational, and social problems. The kinds of problems they have depend on which type of FASD they have. The problems could include :

- Abnormal facial features, such as a smooth ridge between the nose and upper lip
- Small head size
- Shorter-than-average height
- Low body weight
- Poor coordination
- Hyperactive behavior
- Difficulty with attention and memory
- Learning disabilities and difficulty in school
- 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

Fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) is the most serious type of FASD. People with fetal alcohol syndrome have facial abnormalities, including wide-set and narrow eyes, growth problems and nervous system abnormalities.

Diagnosing FASD can be hard because there is no medical test, like a blood test, for it. The health care provider will make a diagnosis by looking at the **child's signs and symptoms** [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/fetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorders-fasd-screening/>] and asking whether the mother drank alcohol during pregnancy.

FASDs last a lifetime. There is no cure for FASDs, but treatments can help. These include medicines to help with some symptoms, medical care for health problems, behavior and education therapy, and parent training. A good treatment plan is specific to the child's problems. It should include close monitoring, follow-ups, and changes when needed.


Certain "protective factors" can help reduce the effects of FASDs and help people who have them reach their full potential. They include:

- Diagnosis before 6 years of age
- Loving, nurturing, and stable home environment during the school years
- Absence of violence around them
- Involvement in special education and social services


There is no known safe amount of alcohol during pregnancy. To prevent FASDs, you should not drink alcohol while you are pregnant, or when you might get pregnant.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Start Here

- About Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASDs) [<https://www.cdc.gov/fasd/about/>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Understanding Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders [<https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/brochures-and-fact-sheets/understanding-fetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorders>]  (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/informacion-sobre-los-trastornos-del-espectro-alcoholico-fetal>]

Diagnosis and Tests

- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) Screening [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/fetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorders-fasd-screening/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/evaluacion-de-trastornos-del-espectro-alcoholico-fetal-teaf/>]

Treatments and Therapies

- Treatment of FASDs (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders) [<https://www.cdc.gov/fasd/treatment/>]
(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Related Issues

- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome [<https://www.aapos.org/glossary/fetal-alcohol-syndrome>]
(American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus)


Specifics

- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) [<https://familydoctor.org/condition/fetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorders-fasd/?adree=true>] (American Academy of Family Physicians)
Also in Spanish [<https://es.familydoctor.org/condicion/sindrome-de-alcoholismo-fetal-es/?adfree=true>]

Statistics and Research

- Data and Statistics on FASDs (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders) [<https://www.cdc.gov/fasd/data/>]
(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

Clinical Trials


- ClinicalTrials.gov: Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Fetal+Alcohol+Spectrum+Disorders%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Participant experiences with a text message and contingency management intervention for... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40734177>]
- Article: Nonconceptus Mechanisms of Prenatal Alcohol Exposure That Disrupt Embryo-Fetal Development: An... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40692661>]
- Article: Beyond the Brain: The Physical Health and Whole-Body Impact of Fetal... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40525081>]
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Fetal+Alcohol+Spectrum+Disorders%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bedat%5D+NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

Find an Expert

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [<https://www.cdc.gov/>]
Also in Spanish [<https://www.cdc.gov/spanish/>]
- FindTreatment.gov [<https://findtreatment.gov/>] (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)
Also in Spanish [<https://findtreatment.gov/es>]
- March of Dimes Foundation [<https://www.marchofdimes.org/>]
Also in Spanish [<https://nacersano.marchofdimes.org/>]
- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism [<https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/>] 

Patient Handouts

- Fetal alcohol syndrome [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000911.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000911.htm>]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Fetal alcohol syndrome [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000911.htm>]

Related Health Topics

- Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD) [<https://medlineplus.gov/alcoholusedisorderaud.html>]
- Pregnancy and Substance Use [<https://medlineplus.gov/pregnancyandsubstanceuse.html>]

National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders* is the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism [<http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/>]

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