

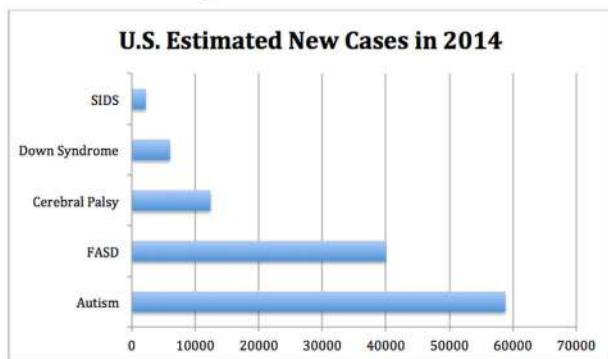
National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

Educating the public, professionals, and policymakers about alcohol use during pregnancy



FASD: What Everyone Should Know

Alcohol use during pregnancy is the leading known cause of developmental disability and birth defects in the United States.



Source: CDC, SAMHSA

FASD affects an estimated 40,000 infants each year – more than Spina Bifida, Down Syndrome, and Muscular Dystrophy combined. (SAMHSA, 2003)



Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD)

is an umbrella term describing the range of effects that can occur in an individual prenatally exposed to alcohol.

These effects may include physical, mental, behavioral, and/or learning disabilities with lifelong implications.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), Partial

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (PFAS), Neurobehavioral Disorder Associated with Prenatal Alcohol Exposure (ND-PAE), and Alcohol Related Neurodevelopmental Disorder (ARND) are the diagnosed conditions associated with prenatal alcohol exposure.

Who is at Risk?

Any woman is at risk of having a child with an FASD if she drinks alcohol during pregnancy. Alcohol can harm an embryo or fetus at any time, even before a woman knows she is pregnant. Many women drink early in pregnancy but stop drinking when they learn they are pregnant—these women are still at risk. Others cannot stop drinking without help. Women who have given birth to children with an FASD are at very high risk of having additional children with an FASD.

“Of all the substances of abuse (including cocaine, heroin, and marijuana), alcohol produces by far the most serious neurobehavioral effects in the fetus.”

Institute of Medicine, 1996

What Are the Effects of FASD?

Depending on the timing and frequency of maternal alcohol consumption, outcomes associated with prenatal alcohol exposure may include:

- Abnormal facial characteristics
- Growth deficits
- Brain damage including mental retardation
- Heart, lung, and kidney defects
- Hyperactivity and behavior problems
- Attention and memory problems
- Poor coordination and motor skill delays
- Difficulty with judgment and reasoning
- Learning disabilities



Normal Brain FAS Affected Brain

Photo courtesy of
Sterling Clarren

FASD also takes an enormous financial toll on affected families and society as a whole. Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), the most severe yet least common effect under the FASD umbrella, costs the United States \$5.4 billion annually. This is only a small portion of the total societal costs associated with FASD.

(USD, 2008)

How Can FASD Be Prevented?

While there is no cure for FASD, it is 100% preventable when pregnant women abstain from alcohol. NOFAS prevents FASD by raising public awareness and teaching youth to make healthy choices, among many other strategies.

Do you have questions or concerns about FASD? Visit us online.

