



Ohio's Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Initiative

Did You Know ...

- ◆ FASD is an umbrella term describing the range of effects that can occur in an individual whose mother drank alcohol during pregnancy. These effects may include physical, mental, behavioral, and/or learning disabilities with lifelong implications.
- ◆ Prenatal exposure to alcohol is the leading cause of preventable birth defects in the country.
- ◆ Each year, as many as 40,000 babies are born with an FASD, costing the nation about \$4 billion. *(Source: FASD Center for Excellence)*
- ◆ FASD is an irreversible, lifelong condition that affects every aspect of a child's life and the lives of the child's family – there is no cure for FASD.
- ◆ According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the US Surgeon General, there is no known safe amount or safe time to drink alcohol during pregnancy.
- ◆ It has been estimated, the cost of FASD to Ohio taxpayers for providing special services for education, juvenile justice, medical and mental health services, foster care and unemployment exceeds \$300 million every year. *(Source: Ohio Department of Health, Vital Statistics and Dr. Larry Burd Online Clinic)*
- ◆ Raising a child with FASD is 100 times more expensive than preventing FASD in a child.
- ◆ Due to a combination of factors, most go undiagnosed. In fact, of the estimated 114,000 Ohioans living with FASD, only 300 have been clinically diagnosed. *(Source: Ohio Department of Health)*
- ◆ Early diagnosis and treatment for FASD can help children reach their fullest potential, lessen secondary disabilities and problems, and help families better understand and cope.
- ◆ Although the various effects of FASD are permanent conditions, specific symptoms may be treatable or manageable. People with FASD can grow, improve and function in life with proper support.
- ◆ It's hard to determine lost potential such as educational achievement and other ways that alcohol affects children that go unnoticed.
- ◆ FASD is a 100 percent preventable birth defect. All women of child-bearing age need to know — *Not a Single Drop!*
- ◆ September 9 is set aside annually as *International Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Awareness Day*.

Primary Disabilities:

Possible facial features associated with FAS/ARND include:

- Short palpebral fissures (small eye slits)
- Short upturned nose
- Low nasal bridge
- Flat philtrum (vertical groove between the upper lip and nose)
- Thin upper lip
- Flat midface
- Small chin
- Simply formed, low set ears



Other possible physical defects include:

- Eye and ear defects
- Respiratory (lung) problems
- Heart murmur
- Limb reduction
- Low birth weight
- Hutchinson's teeth

The following primary cognitive disabilities associated with FAS/ARND are caused by brain damage. Many overlap with diagnoses for other disabilities. Therefore, many children will be misdiagnosed or underdiagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), Sensory Integration Disorder (SID), and Learning Disabilities (LD), among others.

- Developmental delays — often acts younger than his or her age.
- Inconsistent performance — seems to “get it” one day and lose it the next.
- Hyperactivity — constantly in motion.
- Impulsivity — says and does whatever comes to mind without thinking about consequences.
- Attention deficits, distractibility — at times their lack of ability to stay focused on a task for very long is due to attention deficits; may also be easily distracted.
- Disorganization — messy, can't find things, unprepared for school or work.
- Poor social skills — has problems making and keeping friends, does not understand social cues or body language.
- Literal thinking — doesn't understand subtle jokes or statements that have double meanings. For example, don't say, “Hit the road” when you mean “Leave” or “Cut it out” when you mean “Stop”.
- Difficulty with abstractions — struggles with abstract concepts such as math, money management, time, ownership, and consequences.
- Difficulty with transitions — needs help when switching from one activity to another. May become very involved in current activity and will have difficulty changing to a new one especially if it is felt that the current activity is incomplete.
- Memory problems — difficulty storing and retrieving information.
- Processing deficits — may think more slowly, may only understand every third word of normally paced conversation.
- Ability to repeat instructions, but inability to put them into action.
- Inability to predict outcomes or understand consequences and cause/effect — poor judgment.
- Difficulty generalizing from one situation to another — a lesson learned in one situation does not carry over to a new situation.