

# Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASDs)

## What is it?

**Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs)** is a group of conditions seen in a child whose mother drank alcohol during pregnancy. Each person with an FASD may be affected in a different way. The condition can range from mild to severe, and a person with an FASD might have some or all of the following conditions:

- 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, reasoning, and judgement
- Poor memory
- Difficulty in school
- Speech and language delays
- Low IQ
- Sleep and sucking problems as a baby
- Vision or hearing problems
- Problems with the heart, kidneys, or bones

There are different names to describe FASDs by the type of symptoms:

1. **Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS):** People with FAS often have some or all of the problems listed above.
2. **Alcohol-Related Neurodevelopmental Disorder (ARND):** People with ARND may have problems with behavior and learning.
3. **Alcohol-Related Birth Defects (ARBD):** People with ARBD may have heart, kidney, bone, or hearing problems.
4. **Neurobehavioral Disorder Associated with Prenatal Alcohol Exposure (ND-PAE):** People with ND-PAE will have problems in thinking and memory; behavior; and daily living such as bathing, dressing, and playing with other children.

More research is needed to know the exact number of people who have an FASD.

## How common is it?

## What causes it?

FASDs are caused by drinking alcohol while pregnant. If you are thinking about becoming pregnant, stop drinking. Many women can get pregnant and not know it for up to 6 weeks. Those first 6 weeks of pregnancy are important for normal development. When a pregnant woman drinks alcohol, her baby does too through the umbilical cord. There is no safe amount of alcohol and no safe time to drink alcohol during pregnancy. FASDs are completely preventable if a woman does not drink during pregnancy.

## How is it diagnosed?

Diagnosing FAS can be hard because there is no medical test for it and other disorders have some of the same symptoms as FAS. Making the correct diagnosis can be hard. Doctors will usually look for a smooth ridge between the nose and upper lip, lower than average height and weight, small head size, problems with attention, hyperactivity, poor coordination, and prenatal alcohol exposure.

## How is it treated?

Treatment will vary from person to person. Children with FASDs will need early intervention to help them succeed. Your child's doctor will discuss appropriate treatment options with you.

### For more information:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fasd/facts.html>

Mayo Clinic  
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/fetal-alcohol-syndrome/symptoms-causes/syc-20352901>