

FASD FACT SHEET

A Fact Sheet About Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders from the Texas Office for Prevention of Developmental Disabilities

WHAT IS FASD?

FASD (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder) is an umbrella term used to describe the range of neurological, behavioral, and physical effects caused by the use of alcohol during a pregnancy. It refers to specific conditions such as:

- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS)
- Partial Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (PFAS)
- Alcohol-Related Neurodevelopmental Disorder (ARND)
- Alcohol-Related Birth Defects (ARBD)

FASD is a brain-based physical disability. As such, FASD is permanent, life-long and cannot be cured.

There Is No Safe Amount Of Alcohol Use...

And No Safe Time To Drink During Any Part Of Pregnancy.



WHAT DOES FASD LOOK LIKE?

Most children with FASD may look completely normal. **You cannot physically see brain damage-** you can only see the results in the behavior of the individual. The key characteristics of FASD brain damage are:

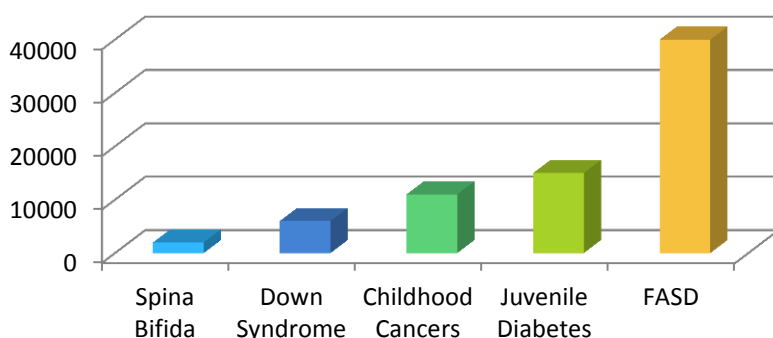


- **Difficulty with assessment, judgment, impulse control and reasoning** which often lands them in trouble at home, at school, and with the law (They may be able to recite the rules, but they are unable to use them to govern their behavior).
- **Misunderstanding of cause and effect** which often leads to high rates of recidivism in the criminal system and problems with discipline because they are unable to predict the consequences of their actions.¹
- **Inability to generalize or think abstractly** means that they are unable to apply lessons learned in one situation to another (They may understand that they're not to run into the street in front of their house, but may not be able to apply that lesson instinctively to other streets).

- **Trouble focusing and hyperactivity, poor memory, emotional immaturity and social skill deficits, and learning disabilities** often mean that they perform poorly in school, have trouble holding jobs, and can be difficult to manage at home.

HOW PREVALENT IS FASD?

Conservative estimates say **a FASD may occur in 1 in 100 live births** nationally². Of the approximately 380,000 TX births, 3,800 may have FASD. In the US, about 2,000 children are born with spina bifida³, 1 in 1,000 children are born with Down Syndrome⁴, 11,630 of children get a childhood cancer⁵, 2 in 1,000 children are born with Type 1 Juvenile Diabetes⁶; about 40,000 are born with FASD⁷.



The graph above represents the estimated number of new cases in the United States, each year.

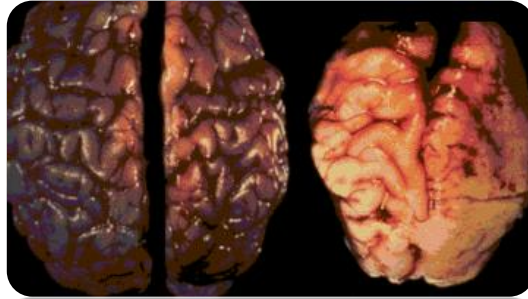
Possible Physical Effects of FASD

- Brain Damage
- Facial Anomalies
- Growth Deficiencies
- Defects of the heart, kidneys, and liver
- Vision and hearing problems
- Skeletal defects
- Dental abnormalities

HOW MUCH IS FASD COSTING US?

The cost to the nation of FAS, the least common and most severe of the disorders under the FASD umbrella, may be up to \$3.6 billion each year; the lifetime cost for an individual with FASD is about \$2 million⁸.

Compare these two infant brains. The baby on the left had no prenatal exposure to alcohol, while the baby on the right's mother drank throughout the pregnancy. Because the brain and central nervous system are developing throughout the entire pregnancy, alcohol can adversely affect the fetus at any time, causing "hidden" birth defects.



Of The Population Of Individuals With FASD:

- 35% have alcohol and drug problems
- 35% of adults and adolescents had been in prison for a crime
- 45% engaged in inappropriate sexual behavior
- 60% of those over the age of 12 have been charged with or convicted of a crime
- 60% had disrupted school experiences
- 72% had experienced physical or sexual abuse, or domestic violence
- 82% are unable to live independently
- 94% also have a mental illness
- 100% of the cases were preventable⁹

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?

The statistics on the left are known as **"secondary disabilities"** that result from brain damage sustained due to alcohol exposure in the womb. Several protective factors can be provided to help people with FASD avoid these secondary disabilities such as: **early diagnosis, eligibility for disability services, a stable home, and a life free of violence.** It is important to remember that FASD is a lifelong condition with effects that differ from age to age throughout the lifespan.

These effects cannot be changed, but they can be accommodated. Individuals with FASD can grow, improve, and learn to function well in life with proper support and services and accommodations. By catching the problem early, we can set up individuals with FASD for success, not failure, and make sure that they don't fall through the cracks in the system. Because there is no cure for FASD (the damage is permanent) the need for accommodations may continue throughout an individual's life. Help prevent FASD by spreading the word about the dangers of mixing alcohol and pregnancy, and help advocate for increased social services for those with FASD.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON FASD

- The National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome website: www.nofas.org
- The FASD Center for Excellence website www.fascenter.samhsa.gov
- Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website: www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fasd/index.html
- Texas Office for the Prevention of Developmental Disabilities website: www.topdd.state.tx.us

References:

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²May, PA, Gossage, JP. (2001). Estimating the Prevalence of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome: A summary. *Alcohol Research & Health*. 25:159-167.

³Shin, M, Besser, LM, Siffel, C, Kucik, JE, Shaw, GM, Lu, C, Correa, A (2010). "Prevalence of Spina Bifida Among Children and Adolescents in 10 Regions in the United States". *Pediatrics*.

⁴Egan, JF, Benn, PA, Zelop, CM, Bolnick, A, Gianferrari, E, Borgida, AF (2004). "Down syndrome Births in the United States from 1989 to 2001". *American Journal Obstetrics &*

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⁵American Cancer Society. *Cancer Facts & Figures*. (2013). Atlanta, GA: American Cancer Society.

⁶Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *National Diabetes Fact Sheet*. National Estimates and General Information on Diabetes and Prediabetes in the United States. (2011). Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

⁷Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep*. Alcohol Use Among Women of Childbearing Age--United States, 1991-1999. (2002). 51(13):273-276.

⁸Lupton, C., Burd, L.; Harwood, R. (2004). "Cost of fetal alcohol spectrum disorders". *American Journal of Medical Genetics*. 127C (671):42-50.

⁹Streissguth, A.P., Barr, H.M., Kogan, J., Bookstein, F.L. (1996). "Understanding the Occurrence of Secondary Disabilities in Clients with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and

Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAE)." *Final Report to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)*. Fetal Alcohol & Drug Unit, Tech. Rep. No. 96-06.

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