

FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDERS (FASD)

March of Dimes • University of South Florida • Florida Department of Health

Welcoming your new baby into your family.

Your baby was born with a special condition that is part of the fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, or FASD. We know this is not easy for you and you may not know how to feel. That's okay. Parents of children with FASD feel shock, denial, grief, and even anger. It is all right to feel like this and no one will blame you. It will get better. You are not alone. Soon you will find lots of people and programs to help you. You may want to join a support group. Get to know your baby. Enjoy your baby.

What is fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD)?

- Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder is the name given to a group of physical and mental birth defects in babies whose mothers drank alcohol during pregnancy.

What causes FASD?

- A baby gets FASD when the mother drinks alcohol while she is pregnant. When she drinks alcohol, so does her baby. Alcohol does not allow the baby to grow and develop well inside the mother's womb.
- It does not matter what form of alcohol the mother drinks. It can be beer, wine, liquor, mixed drinks, light beer, alcohol pops, or wine coolers.
- Drinking alcohol any time while the mother is pregnant may harm the baby.

How will this affect my baby?

- Alcohol may cause different degrees of brain damage in the unborn baby. This means that children with FASD may have some of these symptoms:
 - A hard time learning and controlling their behavior (how they act)
 - Math, spelling and reading problems
 - Problems remembering things (memory)
 - Hard time paying attention
 - Problems with vision, speech and hearing
 - Problems in school
- Some babies with FASD often weigh less than other babies the same age (have low birth weight). As they grow older, they are usually shorter and weigh less than their peers.
- Some children born with FASD have small eyes, thin lips and flattened-looking faces.
- Some babies born with FASD may also have a cleft lip (a split in the upper lip) or congenital heart defects (problem in how the heart forms). (See fact sheets on cleft lip and heart defects.)
- Not all babies born with FASD have all of these problems. They may only have some of these problems.
- Talk to your doctor about the possible symptoms your child may have.

Is there a cure for FASD?

- There is no cure for FASD. A child does not grow out of it. That does not mean there is no hope.
- People live with FASD for their entire life. They may need a lifetime of special care.
- Children with FASD can do very well with the support of others, the right education and help from special programs.

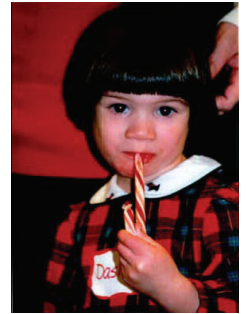
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What can I do to help my baby ?

- Get help early.
- Learn more about FASD to better understand your child's behavior.
- Teach others what you learn.
- Be patient. Your child cannot always control his or her behavior.
- Be positive. Teach healthy behaviors.
- Never hit or slap your child.
- Give your child a healthy diet.
- Give your child a loving home.

Can it happen again?

- You can prevent FASD. If you do not drink alcohol when you are pregnant again your baby will not have FASD.
- DO NOT DRINK if you are pregnant or plan to get pregnant.
- STOP drinking right away if you think you might be pregnant. Do not wait until you are sure.
- If you drink and are sexually active, use birth control all the time.
- Talk to your doctor if you need help to stop drinking.
- There is no safe amount of alcohol during pregnancy.
- There is no safe time to drink alcohol during pregnancy.
- Binge drinking (drinking a lot of alcohol in little time) is harmful to the unborn baby.



Where can I go for help?

Call the Early Steps Program in your county right away. They offer free services to help your child grow and learn. They help you care for your child. First they check (evaluate) how your baby is growing and learning (development). Then, they will work with you to make a plan to get help for your child and for you. Early Steps Programs will:

- tell you where you can learn more about FASD,
- teach you to care for your child at home,
- tell you where you can find free services,
- provide vision and hearing tests,
- provide speech and physical therapy

- ARCH-National Respite Network and Resource Center-to find help in caring for your child: 1-800-773-5433 or www.respitelocator.org
- Children's Medical Services (CMS): call your local county health department for a CMS clinic in your area or visit: www.cms-kids.com
- Family Empowerment Network: for information, resources and support groups in your area: 1-800-462-5254
- Florida Directory of Early Childhood Services: 1-800-654-4440. They can refer you to the Early Steps Program in your area and to other programs.
- If you need help to stop drinking call the Family Health Line (toll free): 1-800-451-2229
- March of Dimes: visit marchofdimes.com
- National Information Center for Children with Disabilities: 1-800-695-0285
- National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (NOFAS): 1-800-66-NOFAS or visit www.nofas.org
- The Florida Center – Fetal Alcohol Diagnostic & Intervention Clinic: 941-371-8820

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