

FASD at a Glance

- No amount of alcohol is known to be safe during pregnancy
- Alcohol can cause more damage to an unborn baby than any other drug
- FASD is the leading known preventable cause of mental retardation
- FASD can cause serious social and behavioural problems
- Early intervention and support of FASD are important for lifetime success
- The earlier drinking stops during pregnancy, the greater the chance of a healthy baby
- FASD and related birth defects are 100% preventable if a woman doesn't drink any alcohol during pregnancy

FASD Invisible Characteristics

Though we cannot see the neurological brain damage that results from prenatal exposure to alcohol, it can cause:

- Attention and memory deficits
- Hyperactivity
- Difficulty with abstract concepts (maths, time, money)
- Poor problem solving skills
- Difficulty learning from consequences
- Poor impulse control
- Poor judgment
- Immature behaviour
- Confused social skills
- Hearing and sight problems

Fetal Alcohol Network New Zealand

"Everyone is part of the solution"

The Fetal Alcohol Network New Zealand (FANNZ) is a group of people and agencies with a shared interest and expertise in FASD prevention and intervention. FANNZ is linked through an e-mail information network, face to face meetings, educational activities and affiliation internationally with FASWorld and other organisations.

If you would like to be part of this network or would like to know more about FASD, send contact details to: Christine at Alcohol Healthwatch, PO Box 99407, Newmarket, Auckland NZ. Tel: 09-520 7037 or Email fannz@ahw.org.nz or visit: www.fan.org.nz

Website links for further FASD information:

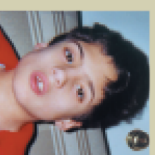
www.ahw.org.nz
www.alac.org.nz/pregnancy.aspx
www.alcoholfreepregnancy.ca
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www.come-over.to/FASCRC/
www.fasconnections.ca
www.fasday.com
www.motherisk.org/FAR/index.jsp
www.nofasrd.org/
www.nofas-uk.org
<http://depts.washington.edu/fadu/>
www.fasdoctrach.ca
www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fasd/index.html

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'Everyone is part of the solution'



"Drinking alcohol during pregnancy..."



...is not a good idea"



This child was born with brain damage known as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. Alcohol can cause more damage to an unborn baby than any other drug including marijuana, heroin and cocaine. There is no known safe level of alcohol consumption during pregnancy.

FETAL ALCOHOL NETWORK

NEW ZEALAND

(FANNZ)

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Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is an umbrella term used to describe a range of developmental disorders and related birth defects resulting from drinking alcohol during pregnancy.

The effects can be severe or mild depending on such things as genetics, how much alcohol is consumed and at what stage of pregnancy drinking occurs. FASD can result in a loss of IQ points and can sometimes be accompanied by other disorders such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Some children exposed to alcohol before birth appear to develop normally. However, there is no way to predict who is at risk. The greater the amount of alcohol consumed during pregnancy, the bigger the risk of problems.

FASD includes several diagnostic terms including:

- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS)
- Partial Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (pFAS)
- Alcohol-Related Birth Defects (ARBD)
- Alcohol-Related Neurodevelopment Disorder (ARND)

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) is the most widely recognised of these alcohol-related disorders. A diagnosis of FAS includes distinctive facial characteristics, growth retardation and brain dysfunction. Fetal Alcohol Syndrome is the leading preventable cause of mental retardation in the western world. More children are born with FAS than Downs Syndrome or Spina Bifida.

(Journal of American Medical Association 1991).

Learning Difficulties

Individuals affected by FASD often have trouble in three areas:

Difficulty translating information – from one sense of modality into appropriate behaviour i.e. hearing into doing, thinking into saying, reading into speaking, feelings into words.

Difficulty generalising information – links are not automatically formed. Learning happens in isolated clumps and may be unconnected or loosely connected to other experiences, thoughts or emotions.

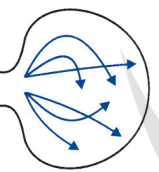
Difficulty perceiving similarities and differences – the inability to make associations, the capacity to compare and contrast, see whole patterns, sequence and prediction and judgment is affected. *Dr B Morse (1991)*

This can be summed up in one word gaps

Understanding Thought Processes

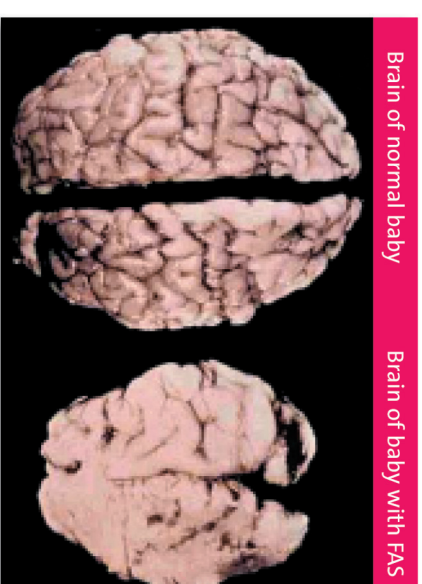


Normal development process: Orderly, organised, sequential. Many opportunities for links and interconnection.



FASD: Inconsistent growth, undergrowth, overgrowth, disorganised gaps and clusters. Clusters can appear as areas of strength eg. Superior ability in art, music, etc.

How Alcohol Exposure Affects Brain Development



The Alcohol molecule is very tiny and passes easily across the placenta to the baby as early as 2 weeks after conception until birth. Although alcohol can affect the development of all cells and organs in the body, the brain is particularly vulnerable to the effects of alcohol throughout pregnancy.

Note:

Symptoms of FASD are not behaviour problems within the child's control, but the result of permanent irreversible damage to the brain. A different approach may be needed to address FASD behaviour difficulties.

"Although individuals with FAS face significant challenges, they are also capable of living successful happy lives. Early intervention and appropriate forms of support are important for their success."

(Diane Malbin in 'Fantastic Antone Succeeds').

'Everyone is part of the solution'