

FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER



**Think
Before You
Drink!**

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder is 100% Preventable!

Drinking during pregnancy can cause Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). FASD refers to a set of birth defects caused by maternal consumption of alcohol during pregnancy. At birth, children with the most severe form of FASD can be recognized by growth deficiency and a characteristic set of minor facial traits that tend to become more normal as the child matures. Less evident at birth—but far more devastating to children with FASD and their families—are the life-long effects of alcohol-induced damage to the developing brain.

FASD is considered to be the most common nonhereditary cause of mental retardation. In addition to deficits in general intellectual functioning, people with FASD often demonstrate difficulties with learning, memory, attention, and problem solving as well as problems with mental health and social interactions. Thus these individuals and their families face persistent hardships in virtually every aspect of their lives.

How is FASD Caused?

Alcohol poisons the unborn baby. When a pregnant woman drinks alcohol, the alcohol enters her bloodstream and then it passes to the baby. A baby's immature liver takes a long time to get rid of the alcohol. As a result, the alcohol level in the baby's blood can be higher than in the mother's blood.

Medical experts have not been able to determine if there is a safe amount of alcohol a pregnant woman can drink before damage occurs. **There is no known amount of drinking that is safe during pregnancy!**

How can FASD be Prevented?

- ▶ *Woman planning a pregnancy should stop drinking alcohol before attempting to conceive and should not drink throughout the pregnancy and while nursing.*
- ▶ *Women who drink and have unplanned pregnancies should quit drinking as soon as they suspect they are pregnant.*
- ▶ *Heavy drinkers should avoid pregnancy until they believe they can abstain from alcohol for the nine months from conception to birth.*

For more information about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder please visit the sites listed on the following page.

FASD RESOURCES

Web sites

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center on Birth Defects & Developmental Disabilities: www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fas

National Task Force on FAS and FAE: www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fas/taskforce.html

National Institutes on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism: www.niaaa.nih.gov
Publications: Alcohol Alerts and *Alcohol Research & Health* magazine

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: www.samhsa.gov

The FAS Family Resource Institute (FAS*FRI): www.fetalalcoholsyndrome.org

Newsletters from the Family Perspective

FAS Times: The FAS Family Resource Institute,
E-mail Vicky: Vicky McKinney
<vicky@fetalalcoholsyndrome.org>

Living with FAS/E: Saskatchewan FAS Support Network,
Phone: Kim Fast 306-975-0884

Books

Cheers! Here's to the Baby: A Birth Mother's Discovery of FAS. La Fever, Linda, 2000, available from FAS*FRI, e-mail: Vicky McKinney <vicky@fetalalcoholsyndrome.org>

The Challenge of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Overcoming Secondary Disabilities, Streissguth, Ann: Baltimore, MD; Paul H. Brooks Publishing Co., 1997

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome: A Guide fro Families and Communities, Streissguth, Ann: Baltimore, MD; Paul H. Brooks Publishing Co., 1997



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