What is FASD?

Drugs and alcohol [1]

Alcohol is a known teratogen – a toxic substance that interferes with the development of the unborn child. Alcohol can harm the development of a baby’s brain and physical growth and some babies may be born with a condition known as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is an umbrella term used for a range of conditions resulting from alcohol exposure in the womb including: Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), Alcohol Related Birth Defects, and Alcohol Related Neurodevelopmental Disabilities.

Features of FASD include:

- poor growth
- facial abnormalities
- structural damage to the central nervous system
- neurological damage
- reduced cognitive function
- impaired ability to plan and organise
- developmental delay, learning or intellectual disability.

Many of the adverse effects from alcohol consumption in pregnancy persist over time and result in significant challenges in adulthood. Studies that follow similarly-affected individuals throughout their lives have reported a range of adverse life outcomes including disrupted education and persistent behavioural and mental health problems.

Individuals with FASD are at increased risk of problems in adulthood classified as ‘secondary disabilities’ including anxiety and depression, substance use disorders, criminal justice involvement, education and employment difficulties.

FASD Awareness Day

September 9 is International FASD Awareness Day, a day to raise awareness about FASD and the importance of alcohol free pregnancies for the nine months of pregnancy. There is no known safe level of drinking during pregnancy, and a pregnant woman, or a woman planning pregnancy, is advised not to drink alcohol.

Further information

- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder [2] - Alcohol and Drug Foundation
- Alcohol, pregnancy and babies [3]
- Alcohol and pregnancy videos [4]
- International FASD Awareness Day [5]


Links