

UPDATE: FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDERS (FASD) PART I

Formerly called Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) and Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAE) the language related to this potentially devastating, yet avoidable condition has been revised in recent years to Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders.

FASDs are caused by maternal drinking during pregnancy when alcohol that is consumed, crosses the placental blood barrier and impacts the developmental process of the fetus. FASD can sometimes cause irreversible damage with life long consequences. FASD manifests with a variety of symptoms and features.

The 3 Main FASD Categories (Center for Disease Control)

- (1) *Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS)* The most severe of the FASD; young people may develop out of the ordinary facial features, stunted physical development or problems with the central nervous system. In addition they may experience a host of learning difficulties, problems with vision, hearing, communication and attention span. There are noted difficulties in getting along with others. In extreme cases, death of the fetus can occur due to heavy alcohol consumption.
- (2) *Alcohol Related Neuro-developmental Disorder (ARND)* can cause intellectual disabilities, learning difficulties and behavior problems. May not function well academically, have poor impulse control, problems with memory, judgment, attention and difficulty mastering math skills.
- (3) *Alcohol Related Birth Defects (ARBD)* People with ARBD may experience problems with the heart, kidneys, and bones or with hearing. They may develop a combination of these issues.

Physical and Psychological Manifestations of FASD may include:

Absence of a philtrum (the grooved ridge on the upper lip below the tip of the nose)
Small head circumference-small ears-low body weight-shorter than average height.
Poor Coordination- speech and language delays- inadequate memory- low intelligence quotient (IQ) - inferior reasoning and or judgment.

No amount of alcohol is safe to drink during pregnancy. We can now say that women should not consume any alcohol as soon as they decide they want to become pregnant as they may become pregnant without being aware and still be drinking during that time.

Coming Soon: Part II: What we need to know; Prevalence (alarming) and Treatment