

# Pregnancy and FASD

**Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is the term used to describe effects of consuming alcohol during pregnancy on the brain and body of the fetus.**

The results of drinking alcohol during pregnancy can be mild to significant, which is why it is considered a spectrum. In most cases, the full impact of any alcohol consumed is not detected until later in the child's development.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder is a lifelong disability. A person with FASD will experience some degree of challenges in their daily living, and to reach their full potential will need support with:

- motor skills,
- learning,
- attention,
- emotional regulation,
- physical health,
- memory,
- communication,
- following rules/ expectations

“Each individual with FASD is unique and has areas of both strengths and challenges”.<sup>2</sup>

There are many factors that will contribute to the effects of alcohol consumption during pregnancy and post-partum. Each parent is unique, and reacts to alcohol differently, so research tells us there is no safe amount of alcohol during pregnancy.

It is estimated that 10-15% of women consume alcohol in Canada and approximately 3% binge drink<sup>4</sup>.

Understanding the effects of alcohol and pregnancy is crucial. It is estimated that 50% of pregnancies are unplanned in Canada. This is a leading reason why women may consume alcohol during pregnancy<sup>5</sup>. Another cause can be using alcohol to cope with trauma, which requires a compassionate community of supports for an expectant family.

## What do we know about alcohol use and pregnancy? <sup>3</sup>

1. FASD is a result of prenatal alcohol exposure (PAE)
2. There is no safe amount of alcohol to be consumed during pregnancy
3. Effects of PAE is not the same for everyone. It is dependent on your metabolism, enzyme function, nutrition, family genetics and other factors.
4. The central nervous system (CNS) is developing throughout the WHOLE pregnancy which is why FASD can impact brain AND the body
5. Environmental and social factors play a critical role in healthy outcomes for families and children. For instance, risks for pregnancy include:
  - lack of accessibility to basic needs (food, shelter, support)
  - witnessing or experiencing violence (physical, emotional)
  - lack of access to healthcare, or medical information.



## Steps for a healthy pregnancy:<sup>1</sup>

1. Stop the use of alcohol and or substances when pregnant and consult a health professional. If this is hard to do, we can help find you support.
2. Access supports and services in your community for healthy pregnancy and post-partum outcomes. This can include parenting classes, doctor appointments and support groups.
3. Ensure your "village" (partners, family, friends, community members) are informed about FASD and can offer you safe support.
4. Ask for help, if you need it. A healthy pregnancy is a community effort.
5. Try to take part in safe activities that do not involve alcohol, and let people know how they can be part of your choices.

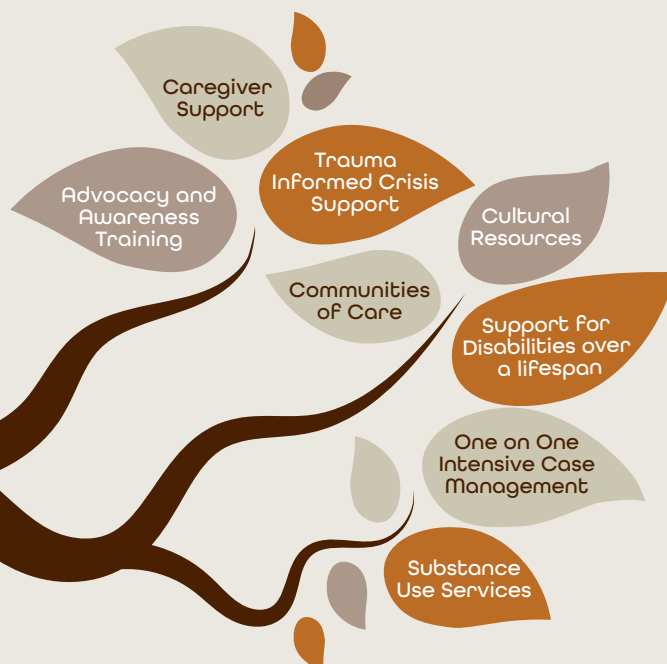


Talk to us at ConnectFASD for more information about our support programs and services.

[connectfasd.ca](http://connectfasd.ca)

866 601 3273 (FASD)

[info@connectfasd.ca](mailto:info@connectfasd.ca)



### FOR FURTHER READING:

1. Government of Alberta.(2019). Alcohol, Pregnancy and Partner Support. [FASD-Info-Sheet-6\\_Pad-1.pdf \(preventionconversation.org\)](#)
2. Harding, K., Flannigan, K., & McFarlane, A. (2019). Policy Action Paper: Toward a Standard Definition of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder in Canada. [Policy Action Paper: Toward a Standard Definition of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder in Canada \(canfasd.ca\)](#)
3. Flannigan,K., Kapasi,A., Pei,J.,Murdoch,I., Andrew,G., & Rasmussen, C. (2021). Characterizing adverse childhood experiences among children and adolescents with prenatal alcohol exposure and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder,Child Abuse & Neglect,Volume 112,2021,104888,ISSN 0145-2134, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2020.104888>.
4. Popova S, Lange S, Probst C, Parunashvili N, Rehm J. Prevalence of alcohol consumption during pregnancy and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders among the general and Aboriginal populations in Canada and the United States. Eur J Med Genet. 2017 Jan;60(1):32-48. doi: 10.1016/j.ejmg.2016.09.010. Epub 2016 Sep 13. PMID: 27638329.
5. The Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada. (2021). Unintended Pregnancies. [Unintended pregnancy – Pregnancy Info](#)