

# Fetal Alcohol Spectral Disorders (FASDs)

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Fetal alcohol spectral disorders (FASDs) are a range of disabilities that can occur during prenatal exposure to alcohol. An individual whose mother drank alcohol during pregnancy can exhibit a variety of effects, including physical, mental, and/or learning disabilities. These effects can provide the person with lifelong repercussions. Fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) is one of the most severe effects of drinking during pregnancy. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, "FAS is one of the leading known preventable causes of mental retardation and birth defects."

There are a few terms associated with this spectrum of disabilities:

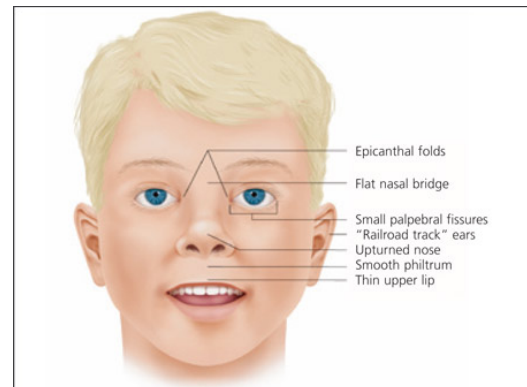
-Fetal alcohol effects (FAE): This term has been used to describe behavioral and cognitive problems that arise in children were exposed to alcohol prenatally, but do not fit all of the typical diagnostic features of FAS. The Institute of Medicine now uses alcohol-related neurodevelopmental disorder (ARND) and alcohol-related birth defects (ARBD) to describe these effects instead of FAE.

-Alcohol-related neurodevelopmental disorder (ARND): This term describes children that might have functional or mental problems linked to alcohol exposure during prenatal development. These problems include behavioral or cognitive disorders or a combination of both.

-Alcohol-related birth defects: This term includes children that might have problems with the heart, kidneys, bones, and/or hearing.

There are a group of features associated with FAS and FASDs. These broadly include abnormal facial features, growth deficiencies, and central nervous system (CNS) problems. The following is a list of characteristics or behaviors that the Department of Health and Human Services produced:

- Small size for gestational age or small stature in relation to peers
- Facial abnormalities such as small eye openings
- Poor coordination
- Hyperactive behavior
- Learning disabilities
- Developmental disabilities (e.g., speech and language delays)
- Mental retardation or low IQ
- Problems with daily living
- Poor reasoning and judgment skills
- Sleep and sucking disturbances in infancy



The CDC reports that rates of FAS ranging from 0.2-1.5 per 1,000 live births, depending on the population studied. Other FASDs have higher rates; almost three times as often as FAS.



This spectrum of disorders is completely preventable. If the mother does not drink alcohol during pregnancy or in the anticipation of becoming pregnant, there will be no chance of having a child with these disorders.

**Expert in Fetal Alcohol Spectral Disorders?** DSES is always looking for volunteers to teach or give presentations!

## Resources and Additional Information

Center for Disease Control and Prevention:

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fas/fasask.htm>