

FASD FACTS

Basic Facts About Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) And Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD)

- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) is the leading known cause of mental retardation in western civilization (NIAAA, Eighth Special Report NIH Publication No. 94-3699).
- Of all the substances of abuse, including heroin, cocaine, and marijuana, alcohol produces by far the most serious neurobehavioral effects in the fetus. (Institute of Medicine Report to Congress)
- Over 50% of women of childbearing age drink alcohol. (American Medical Association) And only 39% of women of childbearing age even know what FAS is. (National Institute of Health)
- About 20% of women who are known to be pregnant continue to drink during their pregnancy. (Journal of American Medical Association) The incidence of drinking during pregnancy has increased substantially in the past several years, possibly due to the misleading media message that a drink a day is healthy. (Center for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Women at highest risk of drinking during pregnancy include women who smoke, who are single, who are in college or have a degree, and women in households with incomes over \$50,000. (Obstetrics and Gynecology Vol. 92, pp. 187-192, Aug. 1998)
- At least 5,000 infants are born each year in the U.S. with full FAS, or approximately one out of every 750 live births. (American Medical Association)
- Each year in the U.S. between 35,000 and 50,000 babies are born with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) that will interfere with their ability to function in life.
- FASD affects one out of one hundred babies in North America, making alcohol the leading cause of brain damage today. (Teratology 1997 Nov;56[5]:317-26)
- Although many individuals with FAS have mental retardation, most individuals with FAS have an IQ in the normal range. (Center for Disease Control and Prevention study by Ann Streissguth)
- Persons with FASD have serious problems with attention deficits, impulse control, judgment, and memory. Although many of the physical characteristics associated with FAS become less prominent after puberty, behavioral and emotional problems become more pronounced. (NIAAA, Ninth Special Report, op. cit., p. 229)
- Among children with FASD up to age 15, the social maturation process seems to be stunted at the level of a 6 year old child. (*Alcohol Clin Exp Research*, Vol. 22, No. 2, April 1998)
- Fewer than 10% of individuals with FASD are able to achieve success in living and working independently. (Center for Disease Control and Prevention study by Ann Streissguth)
- While only the mother's drinking can cause FASD, the father's drinking can lower testosterone levels, decrease healthy sperm, and increase the risk of disorders in offspring. Preliminary animal studies indicate that alcohol can damage the DNA in male sperm. (Paternal Exposure to Alcohol, Abel, 1992)
- Each year, taxpayers spend \$1.9 billion dollars to treat children and adults with diagnosed FAS. (National Institute on Drug Abuse)

