

# ALCOHOL, PREGNANCY, AND FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDERS

**ALCOHOL USE HAS AN IMPACT ON THE HEALTH OF PEOPLE. THE USE OF ALCOHOL DURING PREGNANCY INCREASES THE RISK OF:**

- **Stillbirth;**
- **Spontaneous abortion;**
- **Premature birth;**
- **Intrauterine growth retardation;**
- **Low birth weight;**
- **Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD).**

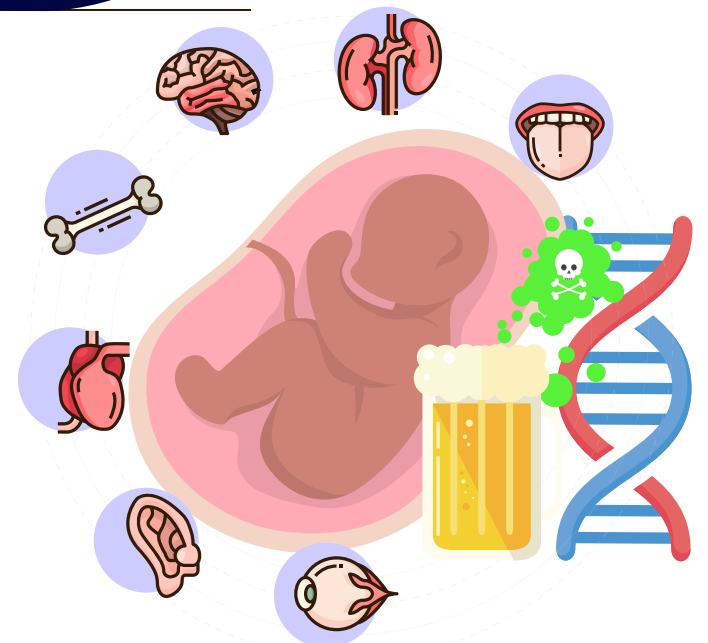


## Fact

FASDs can be preventable. **There is no safe limit of alcohol use** during any time of a pregnancy.

## FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDERS (FASDs)

**FASDs represent a range of disorders resulting only when a pregnant person consumes alcohol.** People with FASDs may exhibit a range of problems including: birth defects of the heart, kidneys, or bones; facial abnormalities; growth deficit; brain abnormalities; intellectual disabilities; and problems with behavior and learning. They may have visual, hearing, and speech impairments.



## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO DETECT CHILDREN/ADULTS WITH FASDs?

**Early identification and diagnosis** have many benefits:

- Identification and diagnosis pave the way for interventions and support, and may help prevent **secondary disabilities** (e.g., mental health problems, substance abuse, disruptive school experiences, and dependent living) and improve life outcomes;
- When FASDs are detected, risks for secondary disabilities decrease by **fourfold**;
- Diagnosis provides a context for understanding a child and adult's behavior.



## WHAT ELSE CAN BE DONE TO PREVENT FASDs?

1. **Improve maternal and reproductive care:** Assess alcohol consumption during regular medical visits, and advise pregnant persons not to drink at all.
2. **Facilitate treatment and support services to pregnant persons** to reduce or stop their drinking when they have an alcohol-use disorder.
3. **Disseminate information to all people on the risks of alcohol consumption during pregnancy.**



### Sources:

1. Pan American Health Organization. Assessment of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders [Internet]. Washington, DC: PAHO; 2020 [cited 23 Sep 2021]. Available from: <https://iris.paho.org/handle/10665.2/52216>
2. Popova S, Lange S, Shield K, Mihic A, Chudley AE, Mukherjee R, Bekmuradov D, Rehm J. Comorbidity of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Lancet*; 2016;387(10022):978–987. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(15\)01345-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(15)01345-8)