



(A joint project between the
Rotary Club of Brisbane
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Foetal Alcohol Syndrome

What is Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) or Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)?

Foetal Alcohol Syndrome is a condition caused by the consumption of alcohol during pregnancy. Babies with this condition may suffer from facial defects, behavioural abnormalities, physical and mental retardation.

Although there are safe levels of drinking for women in general, this DOES NOT apply to pregnant women. The World Health Organisation advises that there is no safe level of drinking alcohol during pregnancy, and that no alcohol is the safest approach.

While FAS has a low occurrence in Australia, there is concern with higher rates among certain groups.

Why is this important to know?

Not only does drinking alcohol affect your own health in general, it also causes ill health to your unborn baby if you are pregnant. Once the child is born, continued alcohol intake will also affect the quality of the breast-milk you produce.

How will drinking during pregnancy affect my baby?

Physical and mental defects to your child may result from alcohol intake during all stages of pregnancy. Some of these problems include:

- Mental retardation
- Learning problems
- Low IQ
- Problems with vision, hearing and speech
- Limited concentration and attention span
- Difficulties with social bonding
- Behavioural abnormalities
- Hyperactivity
- Poor impulse control
- Physical retardation
- Slow growth and development
- Facial disfigurement

Are there further complications?

Yes, studies have shown that infants with FAS are at a higher risk of developing secondary disabilities such as mental health issues, criminal offences, alcohol abuse and drug use.

How can I prevent this?

Foetal Alcohol Syndrome is 100% preventable. It is recommended that no alcohol should be consumed during pregnancy as there is no safe level of drinking for pregnant women.

Foetal Alcohol Syndrome...

Many young women drink alcohol for stress relief, to relax and during social gatherings. However, there are safer ways to achieve this during pregnancy, here are a few suggestions:

- Opt for 'enjoyable' non-alcoholic alternatives
- Exercise regularly
- Get enough sleep
- Spend quality time with family and friends

Where can I find more information?

National Drug Strategy website (Australia):

<http://www.nationaldrugstrategy.gov.au>

National Organisation of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (US):

<http://www.nofas.org/>

Australian Drug Information Network:

<http://www.adin.com.au/>

For counselling and referral tel: Direct Line 1800 888 236

References

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For more information on these and other topics contact:

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