

WHAT IS FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER?

What is FASD?

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a lifelong disability that affects the brain and body of people who were exposed to alcohol in the womb.

What causes FASD?

FASD is caused by **alcohol exposure during pregnancy**. When a pregnant person drinks alcohol, it passes through the placenta and can interfere with the development of the fetus. There is no safe amount of alcohol during pregnancy.

How common is FASD?

FASD is one of the leading neurodevelopmental disabilities in Canada. It impacts approximately 4% of Canadians (which is approximately 1.4 million people).

What are some of the common Signs/Symptoms?

Some of the common signs are:

- Difficulty with learning and memory.
- Impulsivity and/or hyperactivity.
- Difficulty with planning.
- Challenges with self-regulation.
- Difficulty eating/sleeping.
- Understanding the consequences of their actions.
- Difficulty controlling their movements.

What are some possible Related Disorders?

The following disorders may also be present when someone has FASD:

- Mental Health Disorders.
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).
- Intellectual Disabilities.
- Language Disorders.

What are some risks of having FASD?

FASD may increase the risk of challenges in the following areas:

- Living independently
- Learning and academic success
- Managing substance use
- Understanding and following laws
- Finding and keeping employment
- Establishing healthy relationships and boundaries

* Individualized interventions and support may reduce the risk and/or the severity of these issues.

How is FASD diagnosed?

If you suspect that you or someone you care for may have FASD, your community doctor is usually the best place to start. An FASD assessment requires the expertise and input of a multidisciplinary team, who work together to assess different areas of development. The team typically includes a medical doctor, neuropsychologist, occupational therapist, and speech-language pathologist.

Do symptoms change over time?

FASD is a lifelong disability. There is no cure.

What FASD will look like depends on the person's environment and consistent level of support. Things that may help reduce the effects of FASD are:

- A loving, nurturing, and stable home environment
- Absence of violence
- Involvement in special education and social services
- Having a diagnosis.

How can I support someone with FASD?

Each person with FASD has both strengths and challenges and will need individualized supports to help them succeed with many different parts of their daily lives.

Early and ongoing intervention may help a person with FASD. Some examples are:

- Training and education for parents
- Behavioral and educational supports for the person with FASD
- Medication to help with some of the symptoms.

Finding the right plan for each unique person will require some trial-and-error. Good plans will include adjustments, collaboration with others, and checking in often.

Support can be provided before getting a diagnosis. For case management, education and strategies, local health professionals may refer the client to social services, community resources, and available rehabilitation services.

Where can clients and caregivers get more information?

Click on the links:

- [CanFASD](#)
- [FASD Support Network of Saskatchewan](#)
- [Center for Addictions and Mental Health](#)
- [Disability Programs Specialized Services](#)

- This fact sheet is based on the medical model. It is for general information only and does not replace professional medical advice. If provided to clients and their family, it must be reviewed with them to ensure understanding and address any questions or concerns.

- Please keep in mind that a disability is only one part of a person. Identifying and fostering their strengths will be critical for supporting the person to reach their goals.

- For more information and/or support, please visit your local clinic/Community Miyupimaatisiun Centre (CMC) and ask to be connected with a case manager.