

National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

Educating the public, professionals, and policymakers about alcohol use during pregnancy



FASD IDENTIFICATION

Recognizing Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders can be difficult. Early and accurate identification is key to receiving appropriate educational and mental support. Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) is just one FASD; others may be more difficult to distinguish, particularly when the mother's exposure to alcohol is unknown. Many of the symptoms that can lead to an assessment for FAS cannot be identified at birth, but become more recognizable later on. Behavioral symptoms are more common than associated facial characteristics in FASD. The identifying facial features required for FAS diagnosis are shown here. (CDC 2004)

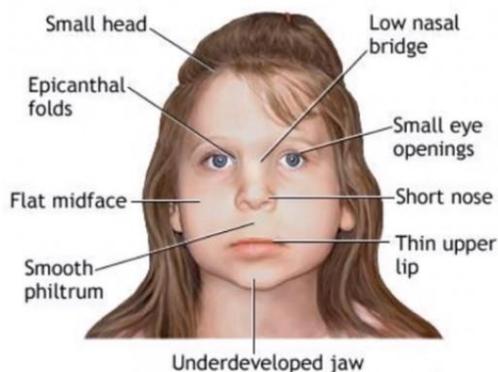


Image courtesy of the National Library of Medicine, NIH

Prenatal exposure to alcohol can affect executive functions, which are controlled by the frontal lobe.

Executive Functions	Effects of Prenatal Exposure to Alcohol
Planning	Inability to apply consequences from past actions
Time Perception	Difficulty with abstract concepts of time and money
Internal Ordering	Difficulty with sequencing, difficulty processing information
Working Memory	Difficulty storing and/or retrieving information
Self-Monitoring	Requires frequent cues, assistance from others with monitoring behavior
Verbal Self-regulation	Needs self-talk, verbal self-feedback
Motor Control	Fine motor skills more affected than gross motor skills
Regulation of Emotion	Difficulty in maintaining stable emotional state, swings from emotional highs to lows; unable to regain composure without assistance
Motivation	Requires external motivators, may demonstrate lack of remorse

(<http://www.fldoe.org/ese/pdf/fetalco.pdf>, 2005)



Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD) is an umbrella term describing the range of effects that can occur in a baby exposed to alcohol in the womb.

FAS (Fetal Alcohol Syndrome) is the most visible disorder associated with prenatal alcohol exposure. The criteria are abnormal facial features, below average height and/or weight, and central nervous system abnormalities.

Individuals with **PFAS** (Partial Fetal Alcohol Syndrome) meet 2/3 of these criteria.

Individuals with **ARND** (Alcohol Related Neurodevelopmental Disorder) experience only the brain, or central nervous system, abnormalities.

Individuals with **ND-PAE** (Neurobehavioral Disorder Associated with Prenatal Alcohol Exposure) primarily experience the behavioral effects of prenatal alcohol exposure, including those listed in the table on the left.

Concerned your child might have an FASD? NOFAS can help:



Or, call our Clearinghouse toll-free
1-800-66-NOFAS