

# National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

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



# FASD PREVENTION

## What is FASD?

**FASD** is an umbrella term describing the range of effects that can occur in an individual prenatally exposed to alcohol. These effects may include physical, mental, behavioral, and/or learning disabilities with lifelong implications. New research shows that 2-5% of younger school-age children in the US have an FASD.

(May et al. 2009)



Photo courtesy of Sterling Clarren

Baby at 6 weeks  
Normal brain

Baby at 6 weeks  
FAS-affected

## How can you help prevent FASD?

- Do not drink if you are pregnant or intend to become pregnant
- If you drink and are a sexually active female of childbearing age, use contraception
- Encourage pregnant friends and family who drink to stop.

Use NOFAS  
to find help!



## Challenges for FASD prevention

- Binge drinking threatens peoples' health, safety, and general well being (CDC, 2013)
- For women, binge drinking means having 4 or more drinks on a single occasion (CDC 2013)
- 1 in 8 women in the US binge drink, usually about 3 times a month (CDC 2013)
- 49% of pregnancies are unplanned (CDC, 2006)
- Many women do not know they are pregnant for weeks or even months during which time they may drink alcohol and cause significant damage to the fetus.
- 10% of pregnant women binge drink during the first trimester (SAMHSA, 2010)
- 11% of pregnant women report current alcohol use (SAMHSA, 2010)
- Health and social service professionals that provide services for women of childbearing age lack knowledge of, or training on, FASD
- Alcohol screenings of patients are not routine in healthcare settings.

## What happens when a pregnant mother drinks?

- When a pregnant woman drinks alcohol, her developing baby does too.
- The developing baby's organs are not fully formed, so it can't process the alcohol like the mother. Alcohol stops the baby from getting the oxygen and nutrients it needs for its brain to develop normally. (www.drinkaware.co.uk, 2013)
- Drinking between weeks 6 and 9 is most likely to lead to facial abnormalities associated with FAS (www.drinkaware.co.uk, 2013)
- Drinking during the first trimester can cause the heart and other organs including the bones, and the central nervous system to develop incorrectly (Mayo Clinic, 2013)