

- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) refers to a set of permanent physical and mental defects found in babies whose mothers drank alcohol regularly during pregnancy.
- Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAE) is a milder version of physical and mental birth defects found in some babies of women who drank lower quantities of alcohol during pregnancy.
- Drinking alcohol in any amount during pregnancy can harm a baby. FAS and FAE are preventable — please do not drink alcohol during pregnancy.

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# Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

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Facts About **FAS**

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**FACT:** FAS is a leading preventable cause of birth defects and mental retardation.

**FACT:** Some effects of FAS in babies include small size/low birth weight; brain damage; behavioral problems; facial abnormalities; and heart, lung and kidney defects.

**FACT:** According to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Center for Substance Abuse Prevention estimates, one to three of every 1,000 babies are born with FAS.

**FACT:** There is *no* safe level of alcohol consumption for a pregnant woman.

**FACT:** In many cases of FAS where information on the father is available, the father has been a drinker or is alcohol dependent. There is growing research that suggests a father who drinks before conception can also cause serious harm to an unborn fetus.

**FACT:** Health advisories urging women who were pregnant or planning a pregnancy not to drink alcohol were first issued by the Surgeon General in 1981.

**FACT:** Health care providers have a responsibility to advise pregnant women and those planning a pregnancy not to drink any amount of alcohol.

**FACT:** Heavy and chronic drinking or drug use can harm virtually every organ and system in a woman's body; which means that it will effect every organ and system in an unborn fetus even more quickly and severely.

**FACT:** Each year, 4,000 to 12,000 babies are born with physical symptoms and intellectual disabilities associated with FAS, and thousands more experience the somewhat less severe disabilities of Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAE).

## The Environment Affects Drinking Decisions

An estimated 6.6 million children under the age of 18 years live in households with at least one alcoholic parent.

Parenting practices, parental alcohol use, and peer drinking can influence a person's alcohol use and the associated problems that can stem from drinking.

Content analyses of current alcohol advertisements on television show that the ads link drinking with highly-valued personal attributes such as sociability, elegance, and attractiveness, and with outcomes such as success, relaxation, romance and adventure.

It's critical that others help support a pregnant woman in remaining alcohol free by recommending alternatives and reminding her of the importance of not drinking for the proper development of the baby.

**For additional information about the effects of fetal alcohol syndrome, or for recommendations on how to get help for someone who may be drinking during pregnancy, call the LCAD information and referral line.**

**Staff are available to take your calls  
Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
or visit us at  
[www.lcad.org](http://www.lcad.org)**

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