

“There’s nothing that you can do about the past. But today you can make some changes and you can make the differences in this child’s life and your life. I’m clean and sober. There’s no reason why I cannot be responsible, take accountability. It’s power.”



Lashaunda, a mother in-recovery, is also a Parent-Child Assistance Program advocate.

Be the Best Mom You Can Be.



Recovering Hope

Mothers speak out about

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders



Stay Alcohol-Free.

You’ve taken a big step. You’re recovering from alcohol abuse. Now, you can take better care of yourself, your children, and your future pregnancies.

You’ve heard other women speak out about fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD). Some women didn’t know that drinking alcohol during pregnancy could hurt their babies. Others didn’t know how to stop. Still others didn’t even know they were pregnant. That was then. Now, they’re alcohol-free. Like you, they’re recovering their hope, their self-respect, and their lives.

You can speak out, too.

Are you thinking about getting pregnant? Remember, if you continue to abstain from alcohol, you can prevent FASD.

Are you currently pregnant? When you stopped drinking, you started helping your baby.

Do you already have a child who might be affected by FASD? Talk to your doctor about a diagnostic evaluation for your child. Ask your counselor about support services for your family.

Do you have a friend who’s been drinking alcohol during pregnancy? Tell her what you’ve learned. Give her the support to help her stop drinking, too.

Pass it on. Help others join you in becoming the best moms all of you can be.

“I drank alcohol a handful of times during nine months. I didn’t think it would have any effect.”



Deanna, mother of a child with FASD, is a Parent-Child Assistance Program advocate.

“I was drinking alcohol while I was pregnant. I wasn’t able to stop because I didn’t know how.”



Penny, a mother in recovery, is having her son and daughter evaluated for FAS.

“I was thinking, well, I’m not an alcoholic. I don’t drink everyday. I’d drink in small amounts. Or I’d drink every other weekend, or only when I had a barbecue. So I didn’t really think it was going to affect me.”



Tiffany, who is in treatment, is realizing her son may be affected by FASD.

FASD Information Resources

- **SAMHSA’s FASD Center for Excellence**
For answers to questions, call 1-866-STOPFAS (786-7327).
Web site: <http://www.fascenter.samhsa.gov>
- **Stop Underage Drinking**
For information on preventing underage drinking, please visit this Federal Web site.
Web site: <http://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov>
- **NCADI: SAMHSA’s National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information**
For additional information and materials on drugs and alcohol, call 1-800-729-6686.
Web site: <http://www.ncadi.samhsa.gov>
- **OTIS: Organization of Teratology Information Services**
For information on local medical consultation for prenatal alcohol exposure, call 1-866-626-6847.
Web site: <http://www.otispregnancy.org>
- **Circle of Hope: A Birth Mother’s Network**
For details, call the National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, (NOFAS), 1-800-66NOFAS (666-6327).
Web site: <http://www.nofas.org>

The listing of non-Federal resources is not all inclusive and inclusion on the listing does not constitute an endorsement by SAMHSA or DHHS.

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Tell Others About FASD.

Any pregnant woman who drinks alcohol takes the same risk. She could live anywhere. Have any amount of money. Be any race. Speak any language.

Alcohol use during pregnancy hurts one in every 100 babies born each year.* No one can cure these problems. Together, however, we can prevent them.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD)

A lot of babies exposed to alcohol before birth do not have full-blown fetal alcohol syndrome. Still they can have many problems. FASD is an umbrella term for the range of effects that can occur. These effects may include physical, mental, behavioral, and learning disabilities.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS)

Some babies hurt by alcohol do have FAS. These babies can have visible signs, such as changes to their facial appearance. They can be short, and they may have smaller heads. Brain damage is the most serious effect. It is not visible, but it can result in severe learning and behavior problems.

* May, P.A., & Gossage, J.P. (2001). Estimating the prevalence of fetal alcohol syndrome: A summary. *Alcohol Research & Health*, 25, 159-167.

“People show a broad range of effects. We don’t expect to see everybody having the exact same problem. It depends on the timing and dose of the alcohol exposure. And it depends on a lot of other maternal and genetic factors, too.”

Paul Connor, Ph.D.,
Research Affiliate,
Fetal Alcohol and
Drug Unit,
University of
Washington



How Does Alcohol Hurt Pregnancy?

A pregnant woman’s unborn child drinks everything she drinks. When a pregnant woman drinks alcohol, it enters her bloodstream. Then, it passes to the child through the umbilical cord.

Babies can’t process alcohol. So their blood alcohol concentration is higher than their mother’s. Alcohol can damage the brain, the face, and developing organs.

No safe time, amount, or type

A pregnant woman doesn’t have to be an alcoholic to risk her child’s health. Binge drinking, once in a while, is dangerous, too. Even moderate or light drinking can be risky.

There is no known safe time, no safe amount, and no safe type of alcohol to drink during pregnancy. Beer, wine, wine coolers, and mixed drinks or cocktails with hard liquor are equally risky.

The best time to stop drinking alcohol is before getting pregnant. However, stopping anytime during pregnancy still helps the child.

“Even if you find out you’re pregnant and you’ve been drinking, it’s better to stop now. Don’t take that hopeless feeling of ‘what more can go wrong?’ During the last two or three parts of your pregnancy, a lot more can go on that hasn’t gone on already.”

Ann Streissguth, Ph.D., Director,
Fetal Alcohol and
Drug Unit, University
of Washington



What Happens to Children?

All pregnancies are different. Drinking alcohol during pregnancy does not affect all babies in the same way. However, a range of problems can develop. These problems are all caused by alcohol. They are not inherited from moms or dads.

Problems can last a lifetime

You’ve already heard that severely hurt babies can look different at birth, or have brain damage that is not visible.

Other problems are harder to identify with FASD. Some occur in infants and children. Others only surface later in life. As adults, some people with FASD are unable to manage money and live on their own.

Here are some signs that suggest the need for FASD evaluation:

- Trouble sleeping, breathing, or feeding
- Excessive crying
- Slow growth before or after birth
- Heart defects or other organ problems
- Vision or hearing problems
- Delayed development
- Behavior problems

“For the most part, Ricky’s very mellow, very friendly. But it doesn’t take much. Out of the blue, all of a sudden, he could be having a rage. Then it’s over with as far as he’s concerned. And he can’t understand why the kid that he was having a fight with isn’t over it.”

Julie and her husband,
Lynn, are foster
or adoptive parents
to seven children
with FASD.
Julie is also a
birth mom to a child
with FASD.



There’s Hope for the Future.

It is very important to find out if a child has FASD. Some children are wrongly thought to be simply willful or lazy. These problems may be blamed on poor parenting or other issues. This can be very stressful for both children and their families.

Getting the help you need

If you think your child could be affected by FASD, act now. Early intervention can make a big difference. Seek out a trained professional for an evaluation. Take background information such as the child’s medical history, and school and psychological evaluations. Bring photos of the child at various ages. Be honest about alcohol use during your pregnancy.

Teachers can be supportive at school. Parents can adjust routines at home. Many communities offer special speech therapy, counseling, and medical services. You can ask your counselor for suggestions.

Be sure to share this brochure with the people close to you. They can help you move from shame about the past to hope for the future. Together, you can bring out the best in every child.

“I started feeling like there was something different about me all the way back into first grade. I wasn’t able to grasp some subjects—grasp the concept like all the other kids were doing. I felt like I was screaming inside: ‘I don’t get it, I don’t get it.’ ”

Sidney, who has
FAS, got the support
she needed.
She finished high
school, married,
started a cat-sitting
business, and
looks forward
to becoming
a good mom.

