

Foetal Alcohol Syndrome

What is Foetal Alcohol Syndrome?

It is a pattern of mental, physical and birth defects (abnormalities) caused by alcohol consumption during pregnancy.

- FAS is the leading cause of mental retardation.
- FAS is 100% preventable.
- Unfortunately FAS is 100% incurable.
- FAS is found in all races and all socio-economic groups.
- There is no safe level of alcohol consumption during pregnancy.
- Even one drink risks the health of an unborn baby.
- All forms of alcohol intake during pregnancy can cause birth defects.



Characteristics of FAS

When a woman drinks alcohol during pregnancy, she risks giving birth to a child with the following characteristics:

- Low birth weight.
- Growth retardation.
- Facial abnormalities.
- Learning difficulties.
- Poor problem-solving skills.
- Poor coordination.
- Poor socialisation skills.
- Early school drop out.
- Behavioural problems including inability to concentrate and stubbornness.

Interventions

The following are amongst others programmes that could reduce FAS:

- Prevention programmes and treatment programmes for alcoholic women could dramatically reduce the incidence of FAS.
- FAS can be completely prevented by not drinking any alcohol during pregnancy.
- Early diagnosis and new techniques of therapy.
- Medical treatment.
- Education and awareness.

NB

Women who are thinking about becoming pregnant should adopt healthy behaviours before they get pregnant including abstaining from drinking alcohol.

If you drank alcohol before you knew you were pregnant, stop drinking now.

Where to get help

If you think you have a drinking problem or know someone who does, get help as soon as possible.

Call a **24-hour toll-free Substance Abuse Help line** (it is free from a Telkom line)
0800 12 13 14 or **SMS 32312**
for advice, support and referral.

