

## Infants and Toddlers (age birth - 2 years)

Concerns should always be discussed with the child's pediatrician. Children may also be screened through the New York State Early Intervention Program at your local health department. Parents can contact the **New York State Department of Health's Growing Up Healthy Hotline by calling 1-800-522-5006 (or through TTY access at 1-800-655-1789)**. Parents in **New York City can call 1-800-577-2229**. The screening and evaluation through the early intervention program are offered at no cost to the parents, and can occur at home, at day care or at the local health department.

## Preschool age children (3 - 5 years old)

Concerns should always be discussed with the child's pediatrician. Health screening and evaluations are conducted through the local school district. The screening and evaluation through the school district are offered at no cost to the parents, and based on any difficulties or challenges that a child may be having learning in a preschool setting or processing information.

## Children and Youth (5 - 17 years old)

Concerns should always be discussed with the child's pediatrician. Educational screening and evaluations are conducted through the local school district. The screening and evaluation through the school district are offered at no cost to the parents, and based on any difficulties or challenges that a child may be having learning in an educational setting or in processing information.

**Is there a NYS website with FASD information?** The **NYS Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS)** maintains a Web page that contains helpful information and frequently asked questions and answers at:

<http://www.oasas.state.ny.us/fasd/index.cfm>.

*This brochure was created by the New York State Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Interagency Workgroup. For more information on membership, visit [www.ccf.state.ny.us/Initiatives/FASDHome.htm](http://www.ccf.state.ny.us/Initiatives/FASDHome.htm)*



# Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD)



## The Basics

## **What are Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD)?**

FASD is a term that describes the birth defects that can occur when a pregnant woman drinks alcohol.

These birth defects include physical, mental, behavioral, and/or learning disabilities with possible lifelong impacts. FASD is the leading cause of preventable intellectual disability.

## **What are the signs of an FASD?**

Although some individuals with an FASD may be short and have small eyes, a smooth upper lip, and some delays in development, most people cannot tell that a person has an FASD just by looking at him/her. In FASD, there are brain function problems that can interfere with growth, learning, and social interactions. Among the more severe effects are intellectual disability, learning disabilities, attention problems, hyperactivity, poor impulse control, and social, language, and memory difficulties.

## **What problems do individuals with an FASD have?**

Individuals with an FASD generally speak well, but have poor understanding of what is said to them. They can read, but have trouble writing. They have problems with concepts like time and money. A person with an FASD generally will have trouble learning from bad experiences and will repeat the behaviors, despite consequences. Frequently it is incorrectly assumed that the person with FASD will not obey rules, when the truth is that he/she cannot understand the rules or the consequences for breaking them. Persons with an FASD often function well below the intellectual level for their age. Their emotional age is also well below their actual age in years.

## **Do persons with an FASD have other disorders?**

A person with an FASD may also have other disorders, such as conduct disorders, autism, Asperger's syndrome, depression, schizophrenia and other mental disorders.

## **How does a person with an FASD act?**

Although there are many differences, most individuals with an FASD have trouble thinking before they act, are emotionally immature, and show poor judgment. A person with an FASD can easily be misled by his/her peers. Individuals with an FASD may be overly sensitive to, or have difficulty dealing with, too much or unexpected stimulation. When they have too much stimulation, they may withdraw and shut down, or they may react with anger.

## **How well do individuals with an FASD function?**

Each person with an FASD is unique, but generally persons with an FASD have difficulties in school, employment and social situations. Individuals with an FASD are often at higher risk of developing depression and addiction to alcohol and other drugs. With proper diagnosis and intervention, these risks can be decreased.

## **Where should caretakers start?**

An early and accurate diagnosis, appropriate services, and a stable home can greatly improve the health outcomes of individuals with an FASD. Early intervention is the starting point, followed by a smooth transition to school. Later, adult services can assist in the transition from school to work. Beginning to plan early can lead to success at school and work.