



Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) :

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Understanding the Impact

Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) refer to a range of physical, behavioural and cognitive problems caused by alcohol exposure before birth. These conditions can develop when a mother consumes alcohol during pregnancy. Unfortunately, though preventable, FASD continues to affect many children worldwide.

FASD is not a single condition but a group of related disorders. The most severe form is Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), which results in significant developmental and physical abnormalities.

Harmful Effects of Alcohol During Pregnancy

Alcohol can interfere with the normal development of a growing foetus. When a pregnant woman drinks alcohol, it crosses the placenta and directly affects the baby, disrupting critical growth and developmental processes. The risk is particularly high during the first trimester.

Children affected by FASD can exhibit :

- Distinctive facial features such as small eyes and a thin upper lip
- Growth deficiencies before and after birth
- Learning difficulties and memory problems
- Poor attention span and concentration
- Challenges with impulse control and emotional regulation
- Difficulties with social interactions and behaviour

The severity of symptoms depends on factors like the amount and timing of alcohol exposure, as well as genetic and environmental influences.



Prevalence and prevention of FASD

FASD affects an estimated 1 in 100 live births globally. However, many cases remain undiagnosed.

Individuals with FASD often face issues like:

- Academic difficulties
- Employment-related struggles
- Increased risk of mental health issues
- Greater vulnerability to substance abuse

Early diagnosis and intervention can improve outcomes, but prevention remains the most effective solution. Women who are pregnant or planning a pregnancy should avoid alcohol completely.