

**Red Shoes Rock!**

Start the Conversation

Join the Conversation

1. Turning invisibility into visibility
2. Creating conversations
3. Changing stigma into understanding and acceptance

<http://fasd.actionpoint.org.nz>

**FASD Facts** 

**What is Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)?**

FASD is a hidden but significant disability in the developed world where alcohol is a normal part of the culture. It describes a broad spectrum of developmental disabilities resulting from damage caused by exposure to alcohol during pregnancy.

Drinking at any stage of pregnancy can lead to cognitive, functional and emotional difficulties, and occasionally physical differences are found. When learning and functional needs are not adequately understood and appropriately supported, FASD can also lead to secondary problems such as mental health disorders, educational and social problems.

**How is FASD caused?**

Alcohol is a neurotoxin or teratogen that alters normal development in utero. There is no safe level. The harm depends on a range of complex factors, such as the amount, frequency and timing of alcohol use. Other factors also have an influence such as genetic factors in both the mother and the child, maternal age and health and whether other substance use or external factors such stress, violence or other negative experiences are present.

**How prevalent is FASD?**

International prevalence studies suggest FASD occur in 2-5% of the population, and may be higher, where binge drinking is socially prevalent. This would equate to around 1200-3000 children born each year with FASD. No research has confirmed the exact prevalence in New Zealand, but it is thought the numbers born affected could be significantly high due to cultural normalisation of hazardous drinking.

Furthermore, FASD without physical symptoms can often be misdiagnosed, and is therefore described as a hidden or invisible disability. Accurate diagnosis requires a specialised, multidisciplinary assessment. New Zealand and Australia follow the Canadian FASD Guidelines for Diagnosis.

**Is FASD preventable?**

Yes. FASD is the leading preventable cause of intellectual disability in the developed world. Alcohol can harm the developing fetus at any stage during pregnancy. Not all babies exposed to alcohol will have FASD but the risk increases with every drink. For women who are pregnant or planning a pregnancy, not drinking is the only safe option.

**Can FASD be reversed?**

Unfortunately brain damage that occurs early in development tends to be permanent. However individuals with FASD live happy successful lives when those around them become better informed and supportive.

**For more research, stories, and links please visit**

Fetal Alcohol Network NZ <http://www.fan.org.nz/>

FASD Care Action Network <http://www.fasd-can.org.nz>

Health Promotion Agency <https://www.alcohol.org.nz/alcohol-its-effects/alcohol-pregnancy>

FASD Hub Australia <https://www.fasdhub.org.au/>