

# NO BLAME NO SHAME

## Is it safe to drink alcohol during pregnancy?

There are so many factors involved in whether alcohol is safe for the fetus that we recommend that during pregnancy no alcohol is the safest choice.

### What are these 'other factors'?

These are the factors or issues which may intensify issues related to alcohol and pregnancy:

Nutrition

Whether this is the 1<sup>st</sup> or the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> pregnancy

Any other drug use

Whether the environment is stressful

Epigenetics

There are so many different reasons why prenatal exposure to alcohol might affect one baby and not another.

We don't know the answers and the doctors don't know the answers.

That's why the rffada advises all pregnant women not to consume alcohol while pregnant.

**Anne's book - Alcohol and Pregnancy – A Mother's Responsible Disturbance will shortly be available on iTunes at a nominal fee – if you wish to read it now, email Anne for a free copy**



## Russell Family Fetal Alcohol Disorders Association

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*training outside the box*

Training on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder is available from

TRAINING CONNECTIONS  
AUSTRALIA

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There is no time and no amount of alcohol which is safe for the fetus



Russell Family  
Fetal Alcohol Disorders  
ASSOCIATION INC



The Russell Family Fetal Alcohol Disorders Association (*rffada*) is a not-for-profit health promotion charity dedicated to ensuring that individuals affected prenatally by alcohol have access to diagnostic services and multidisciplinary management planning in Australia.

ALCOHOL CAN HARM AN UNBORN BABY

# What is Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder?

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is an umbrella term used to describe a range of disabilities that can be caused through pre-natal exposure to alcohol. It is widely recognised as the most common preventable cause of birth defects and brain damage in the world.

FASD is not a diagnosis. It represents a range of diagnoses that fall under the spectrum. These diagnoses are Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), partial Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (pFAS), Alcohol Related Neuro-developmental Disorders (ARND) and Alcohol Related Birth Defects (ARBD).

If doctors have not been specially trained to diagnose FASD, they may misdiagnose affected children with ADD/ADHD, Autism or Asperger's or mental health conditions or personality disorders.

**Seth Russell** at 24 months Seth has full Fetal Alcohol Syndrome



For more information on FASD visit the *rffada* at <http://rffada.org>

## But what does that all mean?

<sup>1</sup>If a child has FASD he may have some of the problems below, however if a diagnosis is made as soon as possible some of these issues can be reduced through appropriate intervention strategies:

School will be difficult particularly in the higher grades

He may not be able to understand cause and consequence and may get into trouble with the police or injure himself or others

He may not be able to generalise learning so sometimes he can recall what he has learned and other times not

He may have a low IQ

He is very likely to have a mental illness when older

He could have a cognitive disability and may not be able to keep friends or relationships

Trouble with the police and problems in employment are common

Inappropriate sexual behaviour combined with immature behaviour could result in more problems with the criminal justice system

Affected babies may cry for weeks on end

As a toddler he may be hyperactive and as a consequence difficult to parent

His life will be difficult

## What is the *rffada*?

The *rffada* was formally established in 2007 by Elizabeth (Anne) Russell after she was unable to identify any FASD specific resources or services in Australia for her son Seth.

Anne made the connection between Seth's behaviours and FASD in 2000 and in 2005 he was diagnosed with full Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) in the United States by Dr Sterling Clarren who was at that time the Robert A Aldrich Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Washington.

Anne then decided that she needed to do something about the situation in Australia by lobbying and advocating for those people living with FASD.

## I had a drink before I knew I was pregnant and before I knew about this – what should I do?

If you have been drinking small amounts do not worry – but the sooner you stop drinking the healthier your baby will be. Talk to your doctor.

As you can see in the information in this brochure on 'What is Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder' there are many other factors that can make a positive difference to the health of your baby.

*rffada* for general information



A 'closed' group for parents and carers



<sup>1</sup> I have used the male personal pronoun because people with FASD are more likely to be male

**NO alcohol is the safest choice for baby**