

# NO BLAME NO SHAME

## Is it safe to drink alcohol while pregnant?

Alcohol is a substance that is known to cause birth defects. Other factors can increase or decrease the potential of alcohol to cause harm to the fetus but there are so many factors that no one can say for sure that it is safe to drink even very small amounts of alcohol. The rffada recommends that for a healthy baby, no alcohol or other drugs is the safest choice<sup>1</sup>.

## What are these 'other factors'?

Factors apart from alcohol that may play a role in the severity of the condition include:

- Nutrition
- Other drug use
- Stress and trauma
- Epigenetics | genetics
- Number of births | pregnancies
- Height | weight

These are some reasons why prenatal exposure to alcohol may affect one baby more severely than another.

It is impossible to tell how even one unit of alcohol will affect your baby.

<http://sogc.org/guidelines/alcohol-use-and-pregnancy-consensus-clinical-guidelines/>

The Russell Family Fetal Alcohol Disorders Association (*rffada*) is an unfunded not-for-profit health promotion charity dedicated to ensuring that individuals affected prenatally by alcohol have access to services and support

*Russell Family*



## Fetal Alcohol Disorders ASSOCIATION INC

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For training on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder

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No safe time and no safe amount

*Russell Family*  
Fetal Alcohol Disorders  
ASSOCIATION INC



Prepared as a community service by the  
Russell Family Fetal Alcohol Disorders  
Association

# ALCOHOL CAN HARM AN UNBORN BABY

# What is Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder?

## What is FASD?

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is an umbrella term used to describe a range of disabilities that can be caused through prenatal exposure to alcohol.

FASD is widely recognised as the most common preventable cause of birth defects and brain damage in the world however new research shows that prenatal alcohol exposure can cause problems in the whole of the body, not just the brain of the child so if your child receives a diagnosis of FASD, they should have a complete check-up.

The new Australian diagnostic guidelines are available for anyone wanting more detail but different guidelines are being used around Australia. In some clinics your child may receive a diagnosis of fetal alcohol syndrome, in another it may be static encephalopathy, in yet another it may be FASD without sentinel facial dysmorphism – they all mean the same or similar.

If doctors have not been specially trained to diagnose FASD, they may misdiagnose affected children with ADD | ADHD, Autism | Asperger's, ODD, GDD, RAD, and other similar conditions. Experts say that the more of these diagnoses a child has, the more likely it is to be FASD.

At right: Seth Russell  
24 months



Seth is now 32 years old. He has full Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

## But, what does all that mean?

If a child has FASD, he or she may have some of the problems below. However with an early diagnosis and appropriate interventions, some of these problems can be reduced. If you think your child has FASD, talk to your doctor or contact Anne at [elizabeth@rffada.org](mailto:elizabeth@rffada.org)

- Affected babies may have trouble settling
- May be hyperactive and difficult to parent
- Difficulties at school particularly from Grade 2 onwards
- Difficulty linking cause and effect
- 'Normal' parenting techniques do not work such as natural justice, time out or tough love
- Inability to generalise learning from one place to another
- Memory may work one day but not the next
- Most affected people will have a normal IQ
- Very likely to have a mental illness and drug or alcohol addiction as teenagers and young adults
- Difficulty keeping friends or relationships
- May experience trouble with the police
- Problems maintaining employment
- Inappropriate sexual behaviour
- Prison | incarceration | mental health facility

Website	<a href="http://www.rffada.org">www.rffada.org</a>
 Like	Russell Family Fetal Alcohol Disorders Assn
 Like	rffada – parents and carers group
 Like	rffada – living with FASD
 Like	rffada – WA FASD Support Group
 Like	Queensland FASD Support Group

## I had a drink before I knew I was pregnant - what should I do?

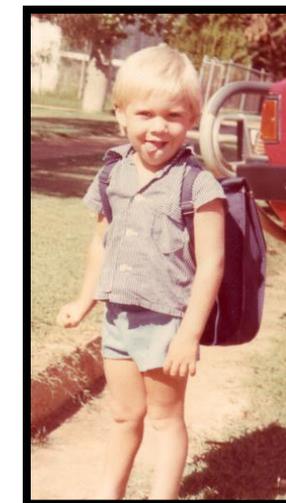
If you have been drinking small amounts during pregnancy – however the sooner you stop drinking the healthier your baby will be. Talk to your doctor or contact Anne at [elizabeth@rffada.org](mailto:elizabeth@rffada.org) because even small amounts can make a difference.

As you can see from the information in this brochure, many factors have a positive or negative effect on the health of your baby.

## Where can I find out more?

Visit [www.rffada.org](http://www.rffada.org) for information on FASD or email [elizabeth@rffada.org](mailto:elizabeth@rffada.org).

Australia-wide training on FASD is available. We can train Employment Consultants; Police; Corrections; Teachers; Foster carers; Alcohol and drug workers; Parents and carers; Frontline workers; Mental health workers and others.



At left: Mick Russell on his first day at Kindergarten. Mick has Alcohol Related Neuro-developmental Disorder.

Mick is now 34 years of age.



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