

Living with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome



Children with fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) or other prenatal alcohol-related disorders can have serious lifelong disabilities, including mental retardation, learning disabilities, and behavioral problems.

- FAS is a disorder characterized by growth retardation, facial abnormalities, and central nervous system problems. FAS is caused by a woman's use of alcohol during pregnancy.
- FAS is a lifelong condition that affects every aspect of a child's life and the lives of his or her family.
- If a child was exposed to alcohol during pregnancy, but does not have all of the symptoms of FAS, he or she may have alcohol-related neurodevelopmental disorder (ARND). Children with ARND may demonstrate learning and behavioral problems similar to those experienced by children with FAS.
- One CDC-sponsored study found that children with FAS and ARND are at very high risk for developing secondary conditions such as difficulties in school, trouble with the law, alcohol and drug abuse problems, and mental health disorders.
- The 10th Special Report to the U.S. Congress on Alcohol and Health estimated the annual cost of FAS in 1998 to be \$2.8 billion.
- To date, interventions appropriate for children with FAS have not been developed and validated through scientific investigation.



CDC is supporting activities to improve developmental outcomes among children who have FAS and to provide education and support to caregivers and families.

- CDC is currently funding a five-site collaborative effort to identify, develop, and evaluate effective strategies for intervening with children with FAS and ARND. The goals of these interventions are to maximize developmental potential of children with FAS and ARND and to reduce the risk of developing additional challenges as a result of their condition.
- CDC is also funding four non-profit organizations to develop, implement, and evaluate educational curricula for parents, school staff, and law enforcement personnel regarding FAS and ARND and how to access appropriate services for affected children and their families.
- The National Task Force on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome and Fetal Alcohol Effect has identified increased education and awareness of FAS and ARND and assessment of the current state of services delivery to affected individuals as priority areas for the future.