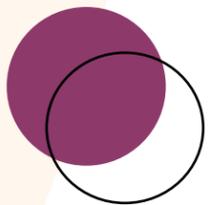


# Effectively Improving FASD Outcomes



**NEAFAN**

Northeast Alberta FASD Network





## Adversity and FASD

### PAE and ongoing adversity and stress often happen together.

People with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) are more vulnerable to the negative effects of stress due to the brain abnormalities brought on by prenatal alcohol exposure (PAE). The prevalence of FASD is relatively high, with estimates suggesting that it affects around 4% of the population in Canada. One of the key challenges in addressing the needs of individuals with FASD is that they often experience a range of interrelated difficulties, which can be complex and difficult to manage. For example, individuals with FASD may have difficulty with memory, attention, and learning, which can make it hard for them to perform well in school or on the job. They may also have problems with impulse control, which can lead to difficulties with hyperactivity and impulsivity. They may also have problems with social interactions and communication, and have a higher risk of behavioural and emotional problems such as anxiety, depression and aggression.

PAE also predisposes individuals to heightened sensitivity to stress from infancy to adulthood. Because of this, many people with FASD are more likely to have problems throughout their lives, and PAE is likely to make the negative effects of long-term stress and problems even worse. Therefore, individuals with FASD, their caregivers, and their families require support to prevent and buffer against poor outcomes. To effectively support individuals with FASD, it is important to take a holistic and multidisciplinary approach that addresses the full range of difficulties that individuals with FASD may experience. This may include providing educational, occupational, and behavioral interventions to help individuals with FASD perform better, as

as well as providing mental health and social services to help them cope with emotional and behavioral difficulties.

Additionally, providing support for the families and caregivers of individuals with FASD is crucial in order to help them understand the nature of the disorder and how to best support their loved ones. By recognizing and addressing the fact that PAE and ongoing adversity and stress often happen together and affect each other, we are better able to come up with helpful, targeted interventions and, in the end, improve the outcomes for people with FASD.



## How Partners Can Help to Try and Prevent FASD

### Other people have a strong influence on women's substance use.

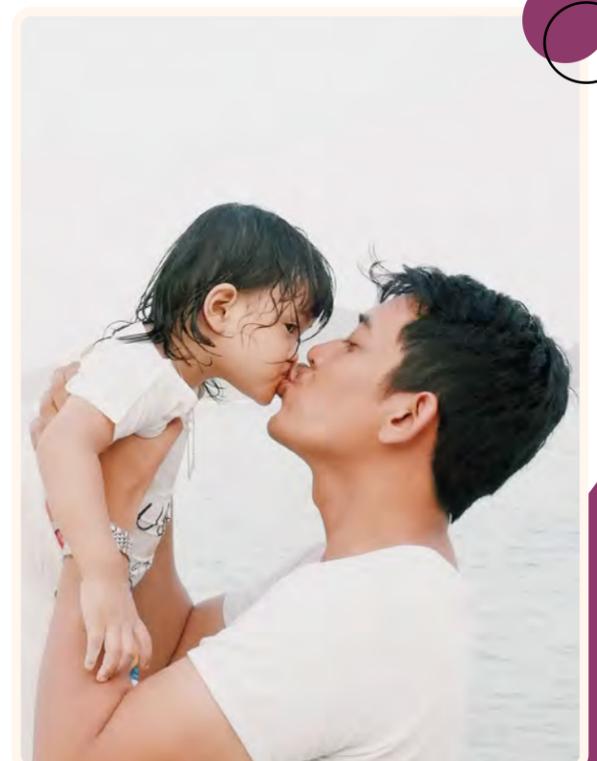
Recognizing that there are many things that can cause women to drink while pregnant, especially the role of their partners, is important for making and delivering programs to prevent FASD. Most of the work to prevent Fetal Alcohol Spectrum

Disorder (FASD) has been done with women and girls in mind. But because partners have a big impact on how much women use alcohol, health and social service providers should broaden their focus to include interventions that reach and involve partners in preconception health and pregnancy planning, as well as helpful changes in alcohol use and relational support during pregnancy. These interventions can work together with those already in place for women and girls to help both partners before and during pregnancy.

Pregnancy outcomes are better with preconception care, partners are better prepared to become parents, and pregnant women have better reproductive health. If both partners are actively engaged in preconception health, they can significantly limit or abstain from alcohol usage altogether. Some women may not feel safe participating in combination interventions that include their spouses, despite the fact that brief interventions like alcohol behavioural couples therapy can decrease alcohol use and improve relationship functioning. Women should determine for themselves if their spouses will be involved.

Future efforts to reduce the prevalence of FASD must place greater attention on the role that partners play in shaping maternal substance use. In order to improve maternal health outcomes and strengthen relationships, it is important that both partners have access to individualized and couple-based interventions.

People of all ages can benefit from an assessment for a diagnosis of FASD. Referral of individuals (across the lifespan) for an FASD assessment should be made whenever there is evidence of or suspected prenatal alcohol exposure at levels associated with physical, developmental, or behavioural effects. **Contact NEAFAN.**



# Integration of Data on Alcohol Use During Pregnancy

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a permanent disability that affects the brain and body of people exposed to alcohol during pregnancy. People often struggle with daily tasks and require assistance with their motor skills, physical well-being, learning, memory, emotional control, and social skills. FASD is thought to be more common in Canada than Down syndrome, autism, and cerebral palsy put together. Over a person's lifetime, FASD is thought to add \$1.1 million to healthcare expenses per case.

There are many factors that contribute to fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD), so it's important that we have a thorough grasp of the problem and its context if we're going to effectively address it. Canada has made great strides, and today we are at the forefront of FASD study in many respects. However, reporting on the national prevalence of alcohol use during pregnancy

and FASD is made more difficult by the disjointed nature of our health system, which includes differences in data collection and sharing across jurisdictions.

There is mounting evidence that links FASD to adversity in early life, chronic health problems, and emotional distress. Information on alcohol consumption, including that of pregnant women, is ready to be collected by provincial databases. It is essential that these inquiries become a part of the normal workflow of medical professionals. Similarly, it would be useful if perinatal forms were standardized. Accurate national data can be captured and reported on by further developing the National FASD Database.



## Connect

Website: [www.neafan.ca](http://www.neafan.ca)

Facebook: [@neafanfasd](https://www.facebook.com/neafanfasd)

Instagram: [@neafanfm](https://www.instagram.com/neafanfm)

Twitter: [@neafanfm](https://twitter.com/neafanfm)

## Links & Resources

- [2023 Canada FASD Conference interest form](#)
- [Insight into Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders](#)
- [Role of Partners in FASD Prevention](#)
  - [Contact NEAFAN](#)



# The Canada FASD Conference

The first ever Canada FASD Conference is happening in November 2023! Join us in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan for three days of presentations and events to learn how we can transform evidence into action in the field of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

This conference will bring together approximately 500 researchers, caregivers, individuals with FASD, policymakers, and professionals to share what they know about FASD. Canadian and international attendees are welcome!

## What's it about?

This conference will bring people from across Canada together to share how research and evidence can inform tangible solutions to address the complexities of FASD. This year's theme is Connect, Inspire, Innovate: From Evidence to Action.

## What should I expect?

Attendees can expect lots of opportunities to learn and connect with other people who are passionate about FASD. This three-day event will include keynote presentations, workshops, poster sessions, and various speakers. It is being held at TCU Place in Saskatoon. The event will be limited to 500 people.

## Who should come?

Anyone and everyone that is passionate about FASD and neurodevelopmental disabilities are invited. This conference is a great opportunity for:

- Development disability researchers, especially those focused on FASD
- Individuals with FASD, their family members, and those that care for them
- FASD professionals, including those working in diagnostic clinics and support programs

- Professionals working in child welfare and social services
- Policymakers and government representatives
- Educators and school staff
- Mental health, substance use and addictions professionals
- Individuals focused on FASD prevention and women's health promotion
- Doctors, nurses, midwives, and other healthcare practitioners
- Lawyers, corrections officers, police, judges, and other law and justice professionals
- And many more!

If you'd like to attend, please fill out this [interest form](#) to stay up to do on the latest conference news and updates.