

FASD Awareness Month 2024

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder: About and causes

What is FASD?

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a diagnostic term used to describe impacts on the brain and body of individuals prenatally exposed to alcohol. FASD is a lifelong neurodevelopmental disorder that occurs in all cultures and levels of society.

Individuals with FASD will experience some degree of challenges in their daily living, and need support with motor skills, physical health, learning, memory, attention, communication, emotional regulation, and social skills to reach their full potential. Each individual with FASD is unique and has areas of both strengths and challenges.

FASD is a brain-based and therefore, invisible injury. While individuals may share common features, every individual is unique with their own strengths and challenges. FASD EFFECTS VARY WIDELY.

(FASDONE, 2024)

The number of people with the disorder is unknown. This is because it's difficult to diagnose and often goes undetected. Recent studies from Canada estimate that between 0.1% and 3% of children and youth have been diagnosed with the disorder (PHAC, 2024). However the prevalence may be higher due to people being misdiagnosed and/or undiagnosed. More investments and resources are needed to better estimate the effects of this disability.

Causes

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder is caused by exposure to alcohol in the womb. It is not hereditary.

Alcohol harms cell development. If the birthing parent consumes alcohol during pregnancy, it passes into the developing fetus. This can cause harm to the developing fetus's brain and body.

However, recent data is suggesting that paternal alcohol consumption can also increase the risks of birth defects in offsprings by affecting sperm cells. ([BBC, 2024](#))

The impact of alcohol on a developing fetus depends on:

- how often the birthing parent has alcohol
- how much alcohol the birthing parent consumes
- when during the pregnancy the birthing parent has alcohol

Other factors can affect fetus development, such as:

- stress

- the birthing parent's age
- smoking or other drug use
- the birthing parent's nutrition

(PHAC, 2024)

FASD Awareness Month

Throughout the month of September, events are held across Canada and around the world in recognition of FASD Day. But FASD awareness initiatives deserve more than one day of focus.

The Government of Canada [officially recognized September as FASD Awareness Month](#) in 2020.

September 9th is International FASD Day

First celebrated in 1999, FASD day is devoted to raising awareness of [fetal alcohol spectrum disorder \(FASD\)](#) to improve prevention of FASD and diagnosis and support for individuals with FASD (CanFASD, 2024).

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a lifelong disability that affects the brain and body of people who were exposed to alcohol in the womb. Each person with FASD has both strengths and challenges and will need special supports to help them succeed with many different parts of their daily lives.

History of FASD Day

[FASD Awareness Day was first started](#) by three parent advocates from Canada and the United States. They wanted to bring attention to FASD and the impact prenatal exposure to alcohol has on fetal development. They chose to recognize FASD Day on the ninth day of the ninth month to highlight the importance of going alcohol free for the full nine months of pregnancy. The first day was celebrated on 9/9/99. Since then, FASD Day has become a global movement, with countries from all around the world participating.

Red Shoes Rock

Red Shoes Rock is an incredible grassroots movement that has gained international recognition. Red Shoes Rock is a global awareness campaign giving voice and support to those affected by prenatal alcohol exposure. The idea behind Red Shoes Rock is simple: wear red shoes at FASD events to bring attention to this disability.

[Red shoes became a symbol for FASD](#) awareness after Canadian educator and advocate, RJ Formanek, wore red shoes on an international stage to talk about FASD. For him, wearing red shoes are a symbol of power and strength.

Initiatives/Events

- **PHAC FASD Project Showcase and Information Sharing event**- September 9th 2024, join for a [virtual information sharing event](#) from 1:30 to 3:00 p.m. E.D.T. to celebrate International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Awareness Day.

This event, “FASD National Strategic Projects Fund: Project Showcase and Information Sharing Event”, will provide an opportunity for the Public Health Agency of Canada’s [FASD National Strategic Projects Fund](#) recipients to share key project findings in order to promote knowledge sharing on key resources, promising practices and lessons learned, as well as to increase awareness on FASD and prevention efforts. This bilingual event will be hosted virtually on Zoom. To register, please follow the

link: https://baldwinav.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_04pHdavXQQiwWQ-9aAIPZg

- **Canada Rocks Red for FASD**-This year, several Canadian monuments and landmarks will be rocking red for FASD to raise awareness of this disability. We’ve asked key landmarks across the country to light up red on September 9th in honour of FASD Awareness Day.

See list below for the landmarks in Ontario:

- **The Peace Bridge**, Fort Erie – *September 8th*
- **Welland Bridge 13**, Welland – *September 9th*
- **Timmins Sign**, Timmins – *whole of September*
- **CN Tower**, Toronto – *September 9th*
- **Hamilton Signature Sign**, Hamilton – *September 9th*
- **London City Hall**, JA Taylor building at Wellington and Dundas, London – *September 10th*
- **Kingston City Hall & Springer Market Square**, Kingston – *September 9th*
- **Oakville City Hall**, Oakville – *September 9th*
- **Brant Street Pier**, Burlington – *September 9th*
- **Jumbo the Elephant**, St. Thomas – *September 9th to September 14th*
- **Ottawa 3D Sign**, Ottawa – *September 9th*
- **Riverwalk Commons & Fred A. Lundy Bridge**, Newmarket – *September 9th*
- **3D Toronto Sign**, Toronto – *September 9th*
- **Clock Tower**, Trent Hills – *September 9th*

- **CanFASD Everyone Plays a Part**-Everyone in the community can have a role in supporting of healthy pregnancies and people with FASD. Your role, big or small, can help shape a more equitable future for those with living experience of FASD and for women and gender diverse individuals who are pregnant or planning a pregnancy.

- **Red Shoes Rock Ottawa**-Join to build awareness September 8th, 10:30 am-1:30 pm at Ron Kolbus Centre at Britannia Beach. Complimentary beverages and ice

cream. Click on this link for more details: [Red Shoes Rock | FASD Information for Ontario \(fasdinfofatsaf.ca\)](#)

Trainings and Resources

Trainings

- [What we know about FASD: Prevention, Treatment and Support Tickets, Wed, 4 Sep 2024 at 12:00 PM | Eventbrite](#)
- [FASD ONE-FASD Assessment Team Training FREE Course](#)-This comprehensive collection of assessment information focusses on operationalizing the multidisciplinary team approach as recommended by the Canadian Guidelines for Diagnosis. The material has been compiled by a number of experienced FASD assessment clinicians and many individuals with FASD and family members who experience the impact every day. This training has been reviewed and supported by members of the FASD Ontario Network of Expertise.
- [FASD 101: An Introductory Training](#)- Learn more about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)! In this course we cover the basics of FASD, alcohol and pregnancy, prevention, diagnosis, challenges, stigma, strengths, strategies for success, and the landscape of FASD in Atlantic Canada. Pay what you can.
- [Health Nexus-Service Provider Training: FASD: A Shared Responsibility](#)- This training will teach participants what FASD looks like across the lifespan for individuals and families, and how to adopt a trauma-informed sense or use FASD specific strategies.
- [CanFASD FASD Trainings](#)-Find different trainings on FASD.

Upcoming FASD conferences

- [5th Annual Simcoe York FASD Conference](#) Wednesday October 9th, 2024. "Stigma, Addiction, Healing and Courageous Conversations" [Simcoe York FASD & Stigma Conference Tickets, Wed, Oct 9, 2024 at 8:00 AM | Eventbrite](#)
- [5th Annual London and Region FASD virtual conference](#) October 22 & 23, 2024, "Neurodiversity Throughout Development: From Misperceptions to Understanding"

Awareness Raising Video/Media Materials

- [FASD ONE PSA Announcements](#)- Four videos to increase awareness about the dangers of alcohol consumption during pregnancy and empowering individuals to make informed choices.
- ["Picture" This: Life as a Parent of Children with FASD Oji Cree Translation \(youtube.com\)](#)
- [What is Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder \(FASD\)? \(youtube.com\)](#)

- [En quoi consiste le Trouble du Spectre de l'Alcoolisation Fœtale \(TSAF\) ? \(youtube.com\)](#)

Resources and tools

- [FASD FAMILY CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOPS RESOURCE LIST](#)- This comprehensive guide for families caring for a child or youth with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) includes a list of funded programs, tips on supporting someone with FASD, and a directory of available web resources. Surrey Place-
- [Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder \(FASD\) programs and services | ontario.ca](#)
- [Your Guide to a Healthy Pregnancy - Canada.ca](#)
- [Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder \(FASD\): A framework for action - Canada.ca](#)
- [Indigenous - CanFASD](#)
- [Indigenous Peoples - FASDJustice CA](#)
- [Revitalizing Culture and Healing: Indigenous Approaches to FASD Prevention \(preventionconversation.org\)](#)
- [FASD Prevalence among Children and Youth: results from the 2019 Canadian Health Survey on Children and Youth](#)
- [Education Essentials For Students With FASD: Setting Them Up For Success/Éléments essentiels d'éducation pour les élèves atteints du TSAF : les préparer pour réussir](#)
- [Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder: For health professionals - Canada.ca](#)
- [CanFASD-Common-Messages-Guide-2023 FINAL-1.pdf](#)
- [FASD-Month-Speech-Tips.pdf \(canfasd.ca\)](#)
- [Foetal alcohol syndrome: Why fathers need to watch what they drink too \(bbc.com\)](#)

Sites

- [Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder: About, causes and co-occurring conditions - Canada.ca](#)
- [The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada: Alcohol and Pregnancy](#)
- [FASD and the Justice System - FASDJustice CA](#)
- [FASD/TSAF Ontario](#)
- [Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder \(FASD\) programs and services | ontario.ca](#)
- [Assessment on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder | Évaluation sur le trouble du spectre de l'alcoolisation fœtale – Canadian Academy of Health Sciences | Académie canadienne des sciences de la santé \(cahs-acss.ca\)](#)
- [The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health | CAMH](#)
- [Canada FASD Research Network \(CanFASD\)](#)
- [Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Ontario Network of Expertise \(FASD ONE\)](#)