

# FETAL ALCOHOL SYNDROME/EFFECTS

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## A PREVENTABLE BIRTH DEFECT

### WHAT IS FAS?

A woman who drinks alcohol while she is pregnant risks damaging her unborn baby. The baby may suffer severe consequences and be born with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Effects (FAS/E).

*There is no known safe amount of alcohol a pregnant woman can drink.* If a mother drinks alcohol her baby drinks alcohol. Alcohol passes through the placenta and on to the baby. Unlike the mother, the baby is poorly equipped to break down the alcohol. This can have devastating effects on a child even before it is born.

Babies born to mothers who drink during pregnancy may show signs of physical, mental and behavioral abnormalities. These birth defects are called Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) or Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAE).

### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF FAS?

- Mental Retardation
- Small Babies with Low Growth Rates
- Heart Defects
- Behaviour Problems
- Smaller Than Normal Skulls
- Cleft Palates
- Congenital Heart Defects
- Characteristic Facial Features

### CAN FAS/E BE PREVENTED? *Knowledge + Choice = Power*

*The tragedy of FAS/E is that it is entirely preventable.*

If a woman stops drinking before she tries to become pregnant, and remains alcohol free during her pregnancy her baby will not develop FAS or any alcohol-related birth defects.

Research indicates the possibility of damage occurring during the first trimester when organs are formed. If drinking continues during pregnancy, additional damage can occur since the baby's brain develops during all nine months.

### WHERE IS INFORMATION ON FAS/E AVAILABLE?

FAS/E Resource Centre - 944-6321; Addictions Foundation of Manitoba Library - 944-6233; Website - [www.ccsa.ca/fasgen.htm](http://www.ccsa.ca/fasgen.htm) Additional sites and resources are listed in the resource *Tough Kids and Substance Abuse*, see FAS activity in this kit for ordering