

This lesson plan can  
be used for both  
grades 8 and 9.

# Learn More About Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

## LESSON OBJECTIVES

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- gain knowledge and accurate information about FASD
- increase awareness about living with FASD in the community
- learn about the prevention of FASD

## CONTENT AND TIME (45-MINUTE LESSON)

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- 9.1 Introduction to FASD (5 minutes)
- 9.2 FASD Scenario (15 minutes)
- 9.3 Questions about FASD (20 minutes)
- 9.4 Closure: Large Group Review (5 minutes)

## REQUIRED MATERIALS

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- Handout 9.1: Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)
- Handout 9.2: Substance Use and Gambling: Pros and Cons
- Handout 9.3: Questions about FASD

## 9.1 Introduction to FASD

(5 minutes)

Introduce the lesson by asking students what they know about FASD.

Can anyone identify what FASD stands for?

Provide a brief overview of FASD using some of the key points provided on the handout Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

It is important to explain to the class that much of the behaviour you will be discussing about FASD may be comparable to other development and learning issues. People who do not have FASD can display behaviour similar to the behaviour you will be talking about. It is important for the class to understand that people can have FASD only if they were prenatally exposed to alcohol.

## 8.2 FASD Scenario

(15 minutes)

The purpose of this activity is to help students understand what a person with FASD might experience in the classroom.

Students can work individually or in small groups.

Distribute the handout Substance Use and Gambling: Pros and Cons.

Have students read the information provided and answer the questions.

Indicate that the class must complete the task with no further instruction from you.

Allow only three to four minutes so that nobody has enough time to complete the task.

Once the class has finished the activity, discuss the following questions as a large group:

1. How did you feel when reading this assignment?
2. Did the information make sense to you?
3. Were you able to complete the assignment with the information that you were given?

4. Did you have enough time to complete the assignment?
5. How do you think you might feel if all of your assignments were like this?

Ask students to use this experience to relate to what it might feel like for a person who has FASD, based on your opening overview.

Distribute the handout Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). Read through the information individually, in small groups or as a class. Ask students to identify the facts in the handout that could be relevant to the challenges they faced during the learning activity they just completed.

### 8.3 Questions about FASD (20 minutes)

Have students work in small groups to discuss the handout Questions About FASD. Each group can assign a recorder to summarize the discussion.

### 8.4 Closure: Large Group Review (5 minutes)

Initiate a large group discussion so that each group can present an answer to one of the questions they discussed.

Reinforce the message that FASD is a lifelong disability. People with FASD will not change their behaviour; instead, they will often need the environment to be changed to support them.

For more information about FASD, refer to the following websites:

<http://fasd.alberta.ca/>

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/fetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorder.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fasd/facts.html>

<https://canfasd.ca/>

# Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

What is fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD)?

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) is a term used to describe the range of physical and mental disabilities that can result from prenatal exposure to alcohol. There is no cure for FASD. Its effects last a lifetime.

FASD is not restricted to certain age, race, culture or socioeconomic circumstances. It results from prenatal exposure to alcohol. Children who were exposed to alcohol as a developing fetus may experience any of the wide range of symptoms that constitute FASD. This means that each person affected by FASD will have their own unique set of challenges and strengths.

People with FASD have permanent brain damage. They may experience the following:

- problems with hearing and vision
- high activity levels
- problems learning in school
- difficulty with speech
- difficulty adjusting to changes in routine
- social problems
- eating and sleeping problems
- difficulty following directions
- poor memory
- poor co-ordination

FASD can be visible or invisible. Some people with FASD may look like every other person, and no one can see their disability. Some people with FASD may:

- be small for their age
- have a small head

- have facial abnormalities
- have problems with their heart or other vital organs
- be restless and have difficulty sleeping
- have vision or hearing problems

Common challenges for those with FASD include:

- adding, subtracting and handling money
- thinking things through, reasoning
- learning from experience
- understanding consequences of their actions
- remembering things
- getting along with others

How are development and learning affected?

Children and youth with FASD may have trouble learning in school. Often people who have FASD receive the same instructions as everyone else, but process this information differently.

People with FASD often find it hard to judge time.

People with FASD may be impulsive, may have trouble learning from their mistakes and may repeat the same mistake over and over. Some teenagers and adults with FASD may break the law because they have problems learning from their mistakes.

People with FASD may experience social problems, may not fit into groups and may have trouble making and keeping friends.

How is the fetus affected by alcohol?

How a developing fetus is affected by alcohol depends on many things:

- how much alcohol is consumed at once
- when alcohol is consumed during the pregnancy
- how often the fetus is exposed to alcohol
- other factors, such as the mother's stress level, nutrition and tobacco or other drug use

Women who are pregnant or trying to get pregnant need to know that alcohol can harm their developing baby. There is no safe time to drink during pregnancy, as the baby's brain and other organs develop throughout pregnancy. There is also no safe amount to drink. It is generally agreed that not drinking is the safest choice if a woman is planning to become pregnant, is currently pregnant or is breastfeeding.

What can a woman do if she is pregnant and needs support to stop drinking?

It is never too late to stop drinking at any time during pregnancy. If a woman stops drinking altogether or cuts back on how much or how often she drinks, she may prevent or reduce harm to her baby. If a woman needs support to stop drinking, help is available by calling the Addiction Helpline at 1-866-332-2322 or visiting an addiction and mental health office. A woman may also want to talk to her doctor or community health nurse about alcohol and pregnancy.

Everyone plays a role in preventing FASD, not just pregnant women.

#### **SOURCES**

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<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/fetal-alcohol-spectrum-disorder.html>

# Substance Use and Gambling: Pros and Cons

Please read the following information and answer the three questions below.

The use of alcohol, other drugs, and gambling can have an impact on many areas of our lives. Our physical health, leisure activities, relationships with others, emotional health, employment, finances, education, and our spiritual well-being can be affected. For some people, the use of alcohol, other drugs, or gambling results in more positive than negative effects. For example, they may feel more relaxed at parties, or feel more confident. However, as people increase their use, the likelihood of negative effects increases. They may begin to feel depressed, experience problems concentrating, lose friends, or have trouble drinking and driving.

Some people say that gambling is harmless; others will say that it can come from betting or using substances. It is important to recognize that using drugs or gambling can have both positive and negative consequences. We wouldn't do something if it didn't have some kind of benefit. People make choices about use based on their views of the balance between the positive and negative effects.

## Questions

1. What are the effects of alcohol and other drugs?
2. What positive effects do some people experience when using alcohol?
3. How many people in Alberta use alcohol?

# Questions about FASD

1. What is FASD?
2. List five activities that are part of your daily routine. These could be activities that you do at home, at school or as extracurricular activities. Considering what you have learned about FASD, identify some of the challenges a person with FASD might experience in doing these activities.
3. What ideas do you have to help a person with FASD?
4. What information do you think is important for the public to know about FASD?
5. Develop a message about FASD to share with the public. What important facts do you think need to be highlighted in this message? Why?