

Be the Village

We can all do our part to **support healthy pregnancies** and **prevent FASD.**





Be the Village

Research estimates that at least 4% of Canadians have Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. FASD can happen in any community or group where alcohol is used.

With approximately 1 in 25 Canadians having FASD, chances are you know someone with FASD; a neighbour, a friend, or a relative. You might not even know it. Looking at the bigger picture of FASD helps people move away from the shame, blame, stigma, and discrimination. The best way to make a difference is to support pregnant people, individuals with FASD, and their families.

Preventing FASD is more than simply recommending no alcohol use in pregnancy; it requires collective support. Raising awareness, understanding the reasons behind alcohol consumption, and creating an environment that supports healthy pregnancies can help make a significant difference. We can all be the village of support for pregnant people in our community.

References available upon request.

September 9

is recognized as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Awareness Day around the world. This global initiative highlights the importance of FASD awareness and prevention and is dedicated to educating the public about the impacts of prenatal alcohol exposure.

What is FASD?

FASD is a diagnostic term used to describe the lifelong impacts on the brain and body caused by prenatal alcohol exposure. FASD is often called a hidden disability because the effects may not be outwardly visible. Often, FASD goes underdiagnosed or misdiagnosed because of underlying stigma. While FASD cannot be cured, early and appropriate support can make a positive impact and significantly improve outcomes for individuals with FASD. FASD can occur in any community or group where alcohol is consumed, regardless of ethnicity, culture, or socio-economic status.

Alcohol is consumed in pregnancy for many reasons

The reasons why someone may drink alcohol can be complex and not easy to see. When a person becomes pregnant, these reasons do not always change. Each person's circumstances can influence their ability to maintain a healthy pregnancy. The underlying reasons that can influence alcohol consumption during pregnancy include:

- unintended pregnancy
- partner's drinking/social pressure
- unclear health messaging
- mental health challenges
- limited access to prenatal care
- coping with stress, trauma, and/or abuse
- dependency/addiction
- fear of stigma and blame for discussing their alcohol use

Shame and blame don't work

Many people know that it is healthiest for both the pregnant person and their baby when alcohol is not consumed throughout the pregnancy. However, many people are unaware that shame and blame do not change the many reasons alcohol might be consumed during pregnancy. In fact, shame and blame (stigma) often prevent individuals from seeking help, discussing alcohol consumption, and attending prenatal care. When we make it easier to talk about prenatal alcohol use, we facilitate access to help, promote better health, and support healthier pregnancies. Removing stigma will make it easier for people to ask for help.

We Can All Make a Difference!



It is easier for pregnant people not to drink alcohol when they have the support of their partner, family, friends, and community. This includes learning about FASD, creating alcohol-free environments and events, supporting and advocating for pregnant people, hosting educational community events, and sharing accurate information.

Service providers also play an essential role in the prevention of FASD by supporting healthy pregnancies. People are more likely to seek help and support when they are provided a safe and welcoming environment. A service provider can:

- provide non-judgemental support
- share relevant evidence-based information and resources from trusted sources
- offer holistic support for each person
- nurture compassionate relationships
- build on their client's strengths
- practice reflective listening
- help link people to relevant support services
- learn and apply motivational interviewing skills

We can all make a difference. Together, we can raise FASD awareness and build a village that supports healthy pregnancies and embraces individuals living with FASD.



Alcohol Affects Every Person and Pregnancy Differently

Alcohol affects every person's body differently. Alcohol also affects every fetus (unborn baby) differently. This is why each person with FASD has different strengths and challenges. Here are some contributing factors:

- Health during pregnancy (food, exercise, prenatal vitamins, and illnesses)
- How much alcohol is consumed at a time
- What part of the fetus is developing when alcohol exposure occurred
- DNA (genetics) of the parents
- Depression, stress, violence, poverty, or trauma
- Where a person lives, learns, works, and socializes (social determinants of health)

Is there an amount of alcohol that is safe during pregnancy?

Science shows that alcohol exposure in pregnancy can affect the unborn baby. There is no evidence that there is any safe amount of alcohol exposure during pregnancy. The safest choice is no alcohol.

Tips for a healthy pregnancy

To improve health outcomes, individuals who are pregnant or planning a pregnancy can:

- try to eat a variety of healthy foods every day and following Canada's Food Guide
- take a daily multivitamin containing folic acid
- discontinue alcohol and substance use
- seek support from partners, family, friends, and/or healthcare providers as needed

Alcohol exposure affects fetal development

During pregnancy, alcohol can affect **any** part of the unborn baby's developing body. This includes the brain, which continues to develop throughout all nine months of pregnancy.

Alcohol can affect the fetus before a person knows they are pregnant. Prenatal alcohol exposure can cause challenges with:

- motor skills (how the muscles move and act)
- brain structure (how the brain is built) and functioning
- thinking, perception, and reasoning
- language (how one uses and understands language)
- academic achievement
- memory

- attention (how one focuses on tasks, including less enjoyable or more challenging tasks)
- executive function (ability to plan, follow instructions, and understand abstract concepts)
- regulation (how one controls emotions, reacts to stress, or reacts to different situations)
- adaptive behaviour (how one manages everyday life and social situations)

Other parts of the baby that are developing when alcohol exposure occurs can be affected. There may be challenges with:

- response to different sensations (touch, movement, sounds, smell, sight, and taste)
- heart, kidneys, and/or bones



Reducing harm

It is never too late to reduce harm by quitting drinking or cutting back on drinking.

It is not always easy to stop drinking, but working on changes before pregnancy can make it easier. When partners, family, and friends are supportive, it is not as difficult to make changes. Healthcare professionals and counsellors can also help.

What if an unborn baby has been exposed to alcohol?

If a baby has been prenatally exposed to alcohol, talking to a healthcare provider and watching for any physical or developmental challenges can help protect the baby. Providing early support, getting a diagnosis when the time is right, and supporting the family may help prevent some secondary challenges.

FASD and the brain

The brain is continually changing and adapting. This is called neuroplasticity. Even if areas of the brain are affected before birth, the brain has an amazing capacity to adapt. When exposed to alcohol prenatally, the brain might experience life-long damage and not function the way it would have otherwise, but it can still learn new ways of working, even if it takes more practice.

Research is providing hope that effective therapies can positively impact individuals affected by prenatal exposure to alcohol, supporting them to develop new skills and strategies.

Working together for success for children with FASD (protective factors)

Protective factors for children with FASD include:

- getting a diagnosis before 6 years of age
- having a loving, nurturing, and unchanging home with no violence
- getting help from special education and social services when needed
- building on strengths of the child

For help, talk to:

- a doctor, nurse, or health centre
- Saskatchewan HealthLine at 811
- addictions services where you live
- someone who you

The people listed above are here to support everyone's health: mothers, fathers, and babies.

For more information:

- Saskatchewan Prevention Institute
www.skprevention.ca
- Be the Village
www.thevillagesk.ca
- Canada FASD Research Network (CanFASD)
www.canfasd.ca
- FASD Network of Saskatchewan



What are Some Event Ideas for FASD Awareness

1. Serve Mocktails

Many communities serve Mocktails (non-alcoholic cocktails) as an alternative to alcoholic drinks. You can ask grocery stores or SLGA outlets for permission to serve the Mocktails*. You can also give out recipes for the Mocktails. There are many Mocktail recipes online. Best Start has recipes at <https://resources.beststart.org/product/a19e-mocktails-for-mom-brochure/>

You can place labels with information about alcohol, alcohol and pregnancy, and alcohol and partners on the cups you use for the Mocktails to start conversations.

Here are some Mocktails that are not expensive. Thank you to Battle River Treaty 6 Health Centre for sharing these recipes.

Shirley Temple

- Put 2 oz. orange juice in a glass with ice
- Top with 2 oz. Sprite, Ginger Ale, or 7Up
- Garnish with a slice of orange or lemon, if desired

Chocolate Love

- In a coffee mug, put 2 oz. warm milk, 1 tbsp. chocolate sauce, and 4 oz. decaffeinated hot coffee
- Stir to mix
- Garnish with an orange slice, if desired

Cranberry or Grape Chill

- Fill a glass half full of cold cranberry or grape juice
- Fill the glass to the top with cold sparkling soda, Sprite, Ginger Ale, or 7 Up

2. Hold a Mocktail Contest

- a) You can supply the glasses, lemon and lime wedges, and a variety of juices, cocktail syrups, and pop. Participants can create a Mocktail from the ingredients.

Choose two or three people to be judges. They can sample the drinks and decide on the winning recipe. The winning recipe and creator's name could be posted online, placed on bulletin boards, or sent to the local newspaper. If you are posting or printing the recipe, include some prevention messages. The prize can be a gift certificate, a basket of baby items, or a basket with fancy glasses, juices, lemons, oranges, syrups, pop, and other ingredients for Mocktails.

- b) Ask people to submit Mocktail recipes. You could choose three finalists and then serve these Mocktails at an event and have people vote on the best recipe. The person who submits the winning recipe wins a prize.

3. Official Proclamation of FASD

The Government of Saskatchewan endorses FASD Awareness Day each year. Send a letter to your Mayor or Tribal Council to ask for an official proclamation of FASD Awareness Day in your community. There is a sample letter to use or adapt at the end of this document.

4. Host a Health Fair

Host a health fair in your community and have a booth with information about FASD. You can invite people from the community. You can get information from both the Saskatchewan Prevention Institute and the FASD Network of Saskatchewan. Get more people dropping by your booth by adding a game, activity, or giveaway (e.g., Be the Village lip chap or hats).



5. Host a Presentation

Invite the community to a presentation about FASD prevention and awareness. You can contact the Saskatchewan Prevention Institute (info@skprevention.ca) to book a speaker. If you are looking for a speaker about support and strategies, contact the FASD Network of Saskatchewan (training@fasdnetwork.ca).

6. Advertise with Hats and Lip Balms

Wear Be the Village hats and give out Be the Village lip balms at your event. You can order some of these hats and lip balms from the Prevention Institute (info@skprevention.ca). You can also wear the hats while at work. These hats may start conversations about being a village of support for healthy pregnancies and preventing FASD.

7. Take a Photo for Social Media

Take a picture of yourself. Post the picture to social media and write: Be the Village. #FASD #FASDay #2024FASDMonth #FASDAwareness

8. Distribute Information

Distribute FASD awareness information to medical clinics, doctors' offices, stores, or restaurants.

9. Integrate Cultural Practices

Celebrate FASD Awareness Day with a cultural practice that is appropriate for your community.

10. Red Shoes Rock

Wear red shoes at FASD events to raise awareness about this disability. Share your red shoe photos on social media using the hashtag #RedShoesRock

11. Trivia Game

Use the Prevention Institute's recommended FASD prevention messages for a trivia game. The competition can either be online, on radio or in the community hall.

12. Community Art Contest

Hold an art contest to raise awareness about FASD. You could ask people to express how they feel about alcohol and how FASD affects their community. This could either be rock painting or painting on canvas.

13. Distribute Gum with Messages

Buy packages of gum to distribute. Put the Prevention Institute's recommended FASD awareness messages on the packages.

14. Community BreakFASD

Hold a community BreakFASD. A BreakFASD is a breakfast event organized to raise awareness of FASD. You could serve pancakes or bacon and eggs, bannock and jam, or anything people would enjoy for breakfast. Have the attendees answer a quiz to get the BreakFASD.

15. Community BBQ

Hold a community BBQ. Have the participants answer a quiz question for entrance or hold a contest to see who has the most correct answers.

16. Community FASD Awareness Walk

Hold a Community FASD Day Awareness Walk. People can make signs and carry them on the walk. You may need a permit for the walk. Contact your local municipal office and/or talk to the local police about a permit.

17. Create a Placemat

Create a placemat with FASD awareness messaging. Contact local restaurants to see if they will use your placemats. You may even be able to find a few restaurants that are willing to pay for the printing of the placemats that they will be using.

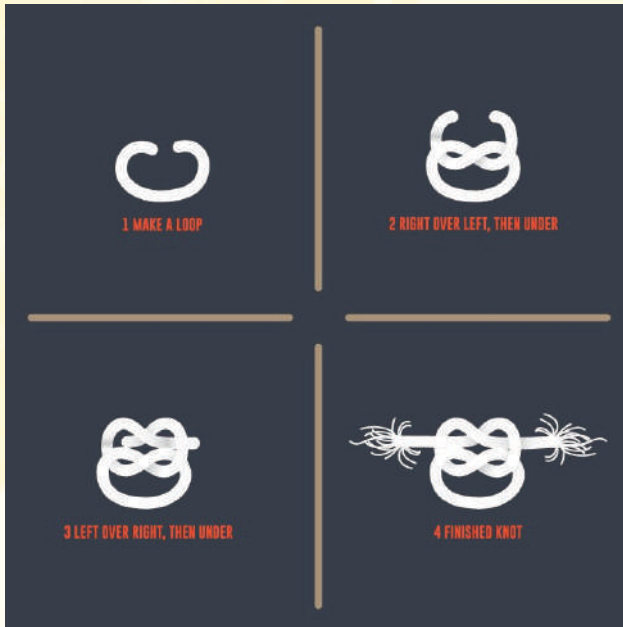
18. Put up Banners

Put up banners in the community with the Prevention Institute's recommended FASD prevention messages.



19. Make FASD Knots

Make FASD knots and give to people at your event. Instructions can be found at <http://www.come-over.to/FASWORLD/fasknot.htm>



The FASD knot was designed by Bonnie Buxton and Brian Philcox. It is worn on the chest to support and let people know about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. It is a sign that the person wearing the knot supports FASD prevention and people with FASD. The chord is tied in a knot known as a reef knot or Canadian knot.

The knot symbolizes the following:

- Cord with worn ends symbolizes the umbilical cord. The baby receives good things such as oxygen and food through the umbilical cord. If alcohol is consumed in pregnancy, the baby receives the alcohol through the cord. The cord can also represent the central nervous system (brain) which can be permanently harmed by the alcohol.
- This type of knot is so strong that it will not break if you try to pull it apart. In fact it will pull tighter. This symbolizes the strong support that we want to give pregnant women and people with FASD.
- The circle inside the knot symbolizes the uterus, the environment for the unborn baby.

20. Participate in Social Media

Participate in social media conversations, such as on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn using these hashtags: #FASD #FASDMonth2024 #FASDAwareness #BetheVillage. You can use some of the sample messaging and images found in this resource.

Sample letter of request for proclamation:

(Date)

(Address
Address
Address)

Dear (Name of person),

On behalf of (name of your organization), we are asking that (Municipality or First Nation) proclaim September 9 as “Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder FASD Awareness Day”. This year, we want to encourage people to be a village of support to promote healthy pregnancies and prevent FASD.

The reasons why some pregnant people may drink alcohol can be complex and not easy to see. Some of these reasons could include:

- unintended pregnancy
- partner’s drinking/social pressure
- unclear health messaging
- mental health challenges
- limited access to prenatal care
- coping with stress, trauma, and/or abuse
- dependency/addiction
- fear of stigma and blame for discussing their alcohol use

Preventing FASD is more than simply recommending no alcohol use in pregnancy; it requires collective support. Raising awareness, understanding the reasons behind alcohol consumption, and creating an environment that supports healthy pregnancies can help make a significant difference.

Each individual with FASD is unique. They have challenges but they also have many strengths. Lack of awareness and the presence of stigma can increase the risk for challenges with school and family, involvement with the law, and homelessness among individuals with FASD. Early diagnosis, providing life-long support, and reducing stigma leads to healthier communities.

We believe that this proclamation will facilitate open and meaningful conversations about FASD and FASD prevention. This proclamation will serve as an opportunity to educate the public, health care professionals, educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders about the importance of FASD awareness and prevention.

We are requesting FASD Awareness Day be proclaimed on September 9. We would appreciate receiving notification of the proclamation by (insert date).

Respectfully submitted on behalf of (name of organization).

Signature(s)

What are things to think about when planning an FASD Awareness event?

Here are some questions to help with planning:

1. What is the date for your event? (Will people be around or are there other things happening?)

2. What is your goal? (What are you trying to accomplish?)

3. Who is your target audience? (General public, educators, healthcare providers, women, men, youth)

4. What will you do to achieve your goal?

5. What is your budget?

6. Who can partner with you or help you?

7. What is the timeline for your tasks and activities?

8. Who will do each task or activity?

9. Where are you holding your event and what is another location if your first choice does not work?

10. Whom can you contact in the media to promote your event?

11. How will you know it is a success?

Give lots of notice for your event through announcements, posters, contacting newspaper and radio stations, and using social media.

FASD Awareness Messaging

DID YOU KNOW ?

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is one of the leading causes of neurodevelopmental disorders. Research currently estimates that at least 4% of Canadians have FASD. This translates to more than 1.5 million people.

To learn more, visit thevillagesk.ca

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our goal is healthy children

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Be the Village

Facilitate FASD prevention conversations
Advocate for healthy pregnancies
Stop stigma
Develop a village of support

To learn more, visit thevillagesk.ca

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FASD AWARENESS DAY
SEPTEMBER 9, 2024

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Together, we can raise awareness about FASD and build a village that supports healthy pregnancies.

To learn more, visit thevillagesk.ca

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FASD is a diagnostic term that describes the lifelong impacts on the brain and body caused by prenatal alcohol exposure.

To learn more, visit thevillagesk.ca

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How can you be part of a village of support?

To learn more, visit thevillagesk.ca

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There are many ways to support healthy pregnancies

- Organize local alcohol-free events
- Educate yourself
- Share information

To learn more, visit thevillagesk.ca

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FASD can happen in any community or group where alcohol is used, regardless of ethnicity, culture, or socio-economic status.

To learn more, visit thevillagesk.ca

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FASD Awareness Messaging

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Share your story
Share how you are contributing to the prevention of FASD by supporting healthy pregnancies.

To learn more, visit thevillagesk.ca

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Fathers play an important role in supporting healthy pregnancies and raising healthy children.

To learn more, visit thevillagesk.ca

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Did you know that trauma, abuse, mental health, stress, and lack of support are reasons for alcohol use in pregnancy?

To learn more, visit thevillagesk.ca

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Did you know? FASD can happen in any community where alcohol is used regardless of ethnicity, socio-economics status, or gender.

To learn more, visit thevillagesk.ca

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People with FASD have strengths as well as challenges. Let's build on strengths.

To learn more, visit thevillagesk.ca

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DID YOU KNOW?

FASD is one of the leading causes of neurodevelopmental disorders. It impacts approximately 4% of Canadians, which is more than Autism Spectrum Disorder, Cerebral Palsy, and Down Syndrome combined.

To learn more, visit thevillagesk.ca

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