

Prenatal exposure to alcohol is one of the leading preventable causes of birth defects. No amount of alcohol is safe during pregnancy. Alcohol can interfere with healthy development causing brain damage and other birth defects.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) is an umbrella term describing the range of physical, mental, behavioral and learning disabilities that can occur to an individual whose mother drank during pregnancy. The term FASD is not a clinical diagnosis. FASD describes irreversible brain damage, which may result in any of several alcohol-related medical diagnoses including fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS), neurobehavioral disorder-prenatal alcohol exposed (ND-PAE), and alcohol-related birth defects (ARBD).

- 64% of women of childbearing age in Vermont are “current drinkers” (drank alcohol in the last 30 days) and, of these, 21% binge-drank (4+ drinks/sitting).  
(2014 VT BRFSS)
- 42% of Vermont mothers reported their pregnancy was unintended. Unplanned pregnancy is a contributing factor to fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, a range of birth defects and developmental disabilities that can occur in any baby whose birth mother drank alcohol during pregnancy.  
(2013 VT PRAMS)
- 68% of Vermont mothers report drinking at least some alcohol in the three months prior to pregnancy, with 18% having reported at least one binge.  
(2013 VT PRAMS)
- Alcohol use is much more prevalent in pregnancy than the use of other substances; 13% of women reported drinking during the last three months of their pregnancy, while 9% report smoking marijuana.  
(2013 VT PRAMS)
- 27% of Vermont mothers reported they did not get advice from a healthcare worker to abstain from alcohol during pregnancy.  
(2013 VT PRAMS)
- The rate of drinking alcohol during pregnancy is lower when health care providers advise women not to drink. Just a discussion about alcohol use is not associated with any difference in alcohol drinking prevalence.  
(2013 VT PRAMS)

### **FASD is All Too Common**

The full range of FASDs in the United States might number as high as 2 to 5 per 100 school children.

### **FASD is Costly**

The cost of FASD to society is high. According to the CDC, the lifetime cost for one individual with FAS in 2002 was estimated to be \$2 million for medical, education and residential care.

In Vermont, annual costs for special education and juvenile justice (children age 5–18) are estimated to be more than \$36,000 per day.

### **FASD is Preventable**

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders are 100% preventable if a woman does not drink alcohol during pregnancy.