



# Let's Talk

## THIS COULD HAPPEN TO ANY OF US.

### WHAT ARE FASDS?

- Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause a range of lifelong physical, behavioral and intellectual disabilities. These are known as fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs).
- You might have heard of fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS), which is one condition in the FASD spectrum. A baby born with FAS has a small head, weighs less than other babies and has distinctive facial features.
- Some of the behavioral and intellectual disabilities of people with FASDs include:
  - **learning disabilities**
  - **hyperactivity**
  - **difficulty with attention**
  - **speech and language delays**
  - **low IQ**
  - **poor reasoning and judgment skills**
- People born with FASDs can also have problems with their organs, including their heart and kidneys.

### WHAT CAUSES FASDS?

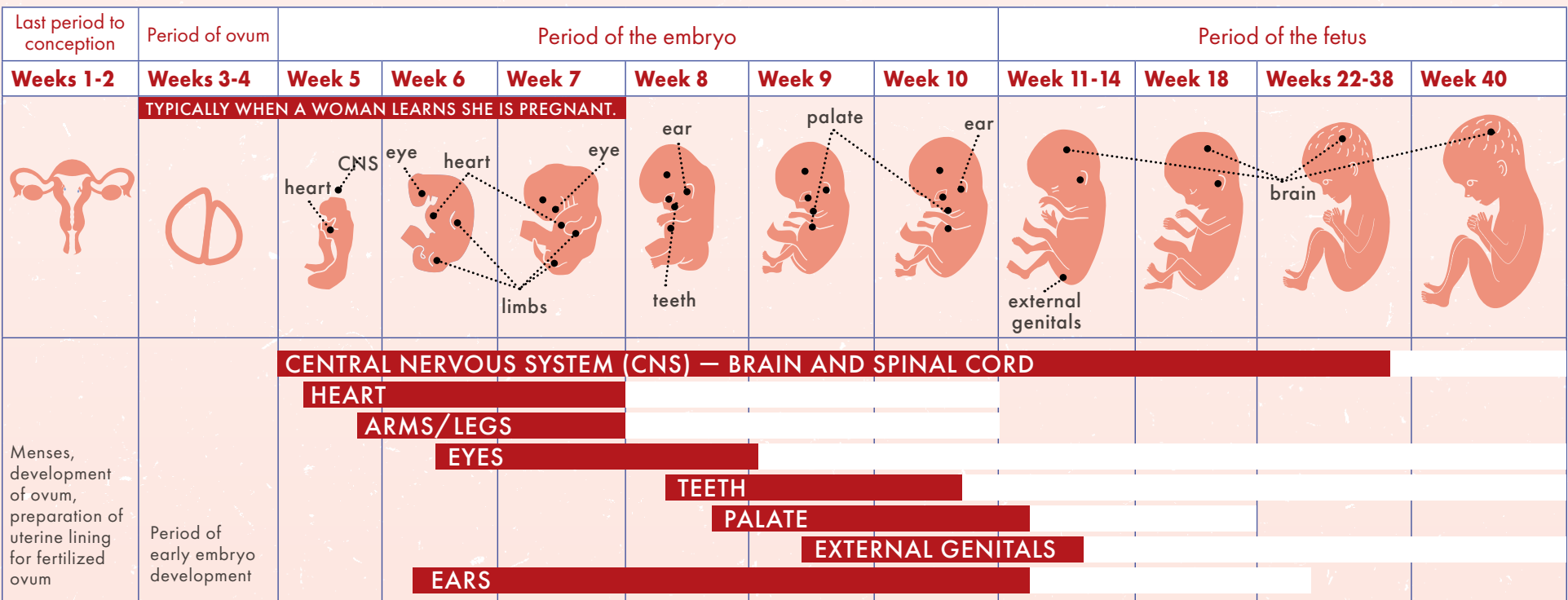
- Alcohol passes through the mother's blood to her baby through the umbilical cord. When a pregnant woman drinks alcohol, so does her baby.
- Because every pregnancy is different, drinking alcohol may hurt one baby more than another.
- The baby's brain, body and organs are developing throughout pregnancy and can be affected by exposure to alcohol at any time.

*"In over 20 years of working on FASD prevention, I have never met a mom who intentionally wanted to harm her baby. Either she didn't know that alcohol was harmful during pregnancy or she needed help to stop drinking."*

**KATHLEEN MITCHELL**

*Vice President and International Spokesperson  
National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (NOFAS)*

### THIS CHART SHOWS VULNERABILITY OF THE FETUS TO DEFECTS THROUGHOUT 40 WEEKS OF PREGNANCY.



- PERIOD OF DEVELOPMENT WHEN MAJOR DEFECTS IN BODILY STRUCTURE CAN OCCUR
- PERIOD OF DEVELOPMENT WHEN MAJOR FUNCTIONAL DEFECTS AND MINOR STRUCTURAL DEFECTS CAN OCCUR
- MOST COMMON SITE OF BIRTH DEFECTS

Adapted from Moore, 1993 and the National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (NOFAS) 2009.  
\*This fetal chart shows the 38 weeks of pregnancy. Since it is difficult to know exactly when conception occurs, medical providers calculate a woman's due date 40 weeks from the start of her last menstrual cycle.



TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR HEALTH AND START THE CONVERSATION.

Learn how FASDs impact everyone, even you.

[LetsTalkFASDak.org](https://LetsTalkFASDak.org)



# Let's Talk

## TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR HEALTH AND START THE CONVERSATION.

My name is Carley. I'm 30 years old, and I was born and raised in Alaska. I work hard during the week as a teacher, and I love to play on the weekends. I live for softball games and bonfires on the beach, or even just spending time upriver at our family cabin, where we laugh until we cry sharing stories over a few drinks by the campfire.

That was until I found out that I'm pregnant. I'm only six weeks along, and when I saw those two little lines on my pregnancy test indicating "positive" — I was shocked. I've been so busy, I had no idea I was pregnant.

I started to panic because I've been drinking. I've been told in the past that a little alcohol won't hurt, but to be sure, I immediately made an appointment with my medical provider.

She confirmed my fear that there is no safe amount of alcohol to consume during pregnancy, but that I had made the right step by coming to her with my concerns. I felt a little relieved when she disclosed she sees women every day that have received misinformation about drinking during pregnancy. She encouraged me to continue to take the necessary steps to improve my baby's development, be informed and know the facts.

### WHY SHOULD I WORRY ABOUT ALCOHOL USE IF I AM NOT PREGNANT AND NOT TRYING TO GET PREGNANT?

- If you drink alcohol and do not use contraception (birth control or condoms, for example) when you have sex, you might get pregnant and expose your baby to alcohol before you know you are pregnant.
- Nearly half of all pregnancies in Alaska are unplanned. And many women do not know they are pregnant right away. So, if you are not trying to get pregnant but you are having sex, talk to your medical provider about using contraception consistently.

### IS IT OKAY TO DRINK ALCOHOL IF I AM TRYING TO GET PREGNANT?

- You might be pregnant and not know it yet. You probably won't know you are pregnant for up to 4 to 6 weeks. This means you might be drinking and exposing your developing baby to alcohol without meaning to.
- Alcohol use during pregnancy can also lead to miscarriage and stillbirth.
- The best advice is to stop drinking alcohol when you start trying to get pregnant.

### WHAT IF I DRANK BEFORE I KNEW I WAS PREGNANT?

- Make sure you get regular prenatal checkups. Tell your medical provider you had been drinking and ask for advice.
- Remember, it is never too late to stop drinking. Because brain growth takes place throughout pregnancy, the sooner you stop drinking the safer it will be for you and your baby.
- If you are unable to stop drinking, talk to your medical provider. Resources are available to help you.

*Learn how FASDs impact everyone, even you.*

**LetsTalkFASDak.org**  



### IF I DRANK WHEN I WAS PREGNANT DOES THAT MEAN MY BABY WILL HAVE AN FASD?

- If you drank any amount of alcohol while you were pregnant, talk with your child's medical provider as soon as possible and share your concerns.
- You may not know right away if your child has been affected. FASDs include a range of physical and intellectual disabilities that are not always easy to identify when a child is a newborn. Some of these effects may not be known until your child is in school.
- There is no cure for FASDs. However, identifying and intervening with children with these conditions as early as possible can help them to reach their full potential.

### ARE SOME TYPES OF ALCOHOL, SUCH AS RED WINE, SAFER TO DRINK DURING PREGNANCY THAN OTHERS?

- Drinking any type of alcohol can affect your baby's growth and development and cause FASDs. This includes all wines, beer and mixed drinks.
- A 5-ounce glass of red or white wine has the same amount of alcohol as a 12-ounce can of beer or a 1.5-ounce shot of straight liquor.
- Some drinks, like mixed alcoholic drinks or malt liquor drinks, might have more alcohol in them than a 12-ounce beer.

### IS IT OKAY TO DRINK A LITTLE OR AT CERTAIN TIMES DURING PREGNANCY?

- There is no safe amount of alcohol to consume during your pregnancy or when you are trying to get pregnant.
- There is also no safe time to drink when you are pregnant. Alcohol can cause problems for your developing baby throughout your pregnancy, including before you know you are pregnant.
- FASDs are completely preventable if a woman does not drink alcohol during pregnancy—so why take the risk?