

## FAS: Detailed Effects of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

*Fetal alcohol syndrome is one of the leading known causes of mental retardation and birth defects. If a woman drinks alcohol regularly during her pregnancy, her baby can be born with FAS, a physically and mentally disabling condition.*

### Physical Effects

#### EYES

- Short eye slits
- Droopy eyelids (making eyes appear slanted)
- Small squinty or widely spaced eyes
- Crossed eyes

#### NOSE

- Small upturned nose
- Upturned nostrils
- Flat, wide nose bridge

#### OTHER FEATURES

- Narrow upper lip
- No groove between the lip and nose
- Flat mid-face
- Small, rounded chin and jaw (in infancy)
- Cleft lip or palate

#### SIZE

- Babies may be small for their age and have small heads.
- They often 'fail to thrive,' meaning that they do not catch up in size to children of the same age.
- They usually remain small throughout life.

#### HANDS & TOES

- Children may have fingers and toes that are small, bent or joined.
- The creases on the child's palms may be abnormal.

#### OTHER ABNORMALITIES

- There may be internal abnormalities such as hip dislocation, and heart or kidney defects.
- External defects may include minor genital abnormalities, clubfoot, excess hair during infancy, and 'strawberry' birthmarks or other abnormal pigmentation.

## Mental Effects

### BABY'S BRAIN

- Brain damage – this can be responsible for difficulties the child has in balance, coordination, learning or memory.
- Retardation – IQ's of children whose mothers used drugs during pregnancy vary significantly. They range from normal to severe.
- Learning Disabilities – some children of mothers who used drugs may have normal intelligence, but learning disabilities show up at school age. Hyperactivity, short attention span or behavioral difficulties may also be lined to the mothers drug use.

There is no cure for FAS. However, with early identification and diagnosis, children with FAS can receive services that can help increase their well-being.

**Compass Mark Drug & Alcohol Information Center**  
*630 Janet Avenue  
Lancaster, PA 17601  
(717) 299-2831*