



FASD: What to Know About Mental Health

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASDs) are a group of diagnosable medical conditions that can occur in a person who was exposed to alcohol before birth. Effects are lifelong and can include mental health conditions, learning disabilities, sensory issues, and physical manifestations such as heart defects, hearing and visual impairments, and more.

Talking about the Mental Health? Give **FASD** a Seat at the Table.

Studies have shown an increased risk for cognitive disorders (for example, memory loss), mental illness, or psychological disorders among people with FASDs.

The most frequently diagnosed disorders are:

- Attention problems, including attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Conduct disorder (aggression toward others and serious violations of rules, laws, and social norms)
- Substance use disorder
- Depression
- Anxiety

((Substance Use Prevention Resources for Youth and College Students, 2024)

FASD affects an estimated 1 in 20 school-aged children. Prenatal Alcohol Exposure (PAE) is a leading cause of birth defects in the United States.

(Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024)



94% of individuals with FASD have or may develop a co-occurring mental health condition

(Petrenko, Tahir, Mahoney, & Chin, 2014)

Individual's with FASD are

- **25** times more likely to be diagnosed with a psychotic disorder
- **20** times more likely to experience substance use problems
- **10** times more likely to have ADHD

(Li et al., 2021.)

Mental Health during Pregnancy

Depression and anxiety are generally known as the most common psychological well-being issues during pregnancy

(Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance, 2023)

Possible interventions to help improve mental health during pregnancy:

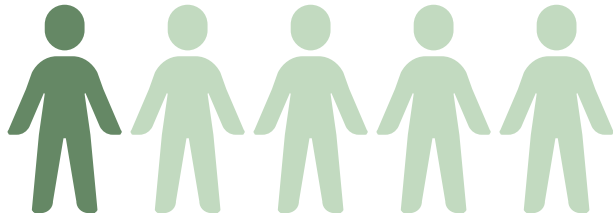
- Consulting with a therapist
- Exercise / exposure to sunshine
- Confiding in close friends and family
- Medication such as antidepressants
- Couple counseling

(Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance, 2023)



Maternal mental health (MMH) conditions are the **MOST COMMON** complication of pregnancy and birth, affecting **800,000** families each year in the U.S. [1,2]

(Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance, 2023)



1 in 5 Pregnant People are Impacted by Mental Health Conditions

75% of Maternal Mental Health conditions remain untreated resulting in long term negative health factors on babies, mothers and families

(Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance, 2023)

People with untreated maternal mental health conditions during pregnancy are **more likely to:**

- Have poor prenatal care
- Use substances such as alcohol, tobacco, or drugs
- Experience physical, emotional, or sexual abuse

(Maternal Mental Health Leadership Alliance, 2023)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). FASDs and secondary conditions. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/fasd/about/fasd-and-secondary-conditions.html#:~:text=Studies%20have%20shown%20an%20increased,disorders%20among%20people%20with%20FASDs.&text=Other%20psychiatric%20problems%2C%20such%20as,for%20some%20people%20with%20FASDs.>

Flannigan, K., Pei, J., McLachlan, K., Harding, K., Mela, M., Cook, J., Badry, D., & McFarlane, A. (2021b, December 31). Responding to the unique complexities of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. *Frontiers*. <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.778471/full>

Maternal mental health overview fact sheet - MMHLA. (n.d.). [https://22542548.fs1.hubspotusercontent-na1.net/hubfs/22542548/Maternal Mental Health Overview Fact Sheet - MMHLA - Nov 2023.pdf](https://22542548.fs1.hubspotusercontent-na1.net/hubfs/22542548/Maternal%20Mental%20Health%20Overview%20Fact%20Sheet%20-%20MMHLA%20-%20Nov%202023.pdf)

Substance Use Prevention Resources for Youth and college students. SAMHSA. (n.d.). <https://www.samhsa.gov/prevention-week/voices-of-youth/substance-use-prevention-resources-youth-college-students>

Petrenko, C. L. M., Tahir, N., Mahoney, E. C., & Chin, N. P. (2014a, August). Prevention of secondary conditions in fetal alcohol spectrum disorders: Identification of systems-level barriers. *Maternal and child health journal*. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4007413/#:~:text=Five%20systems%20level%20barriers%20interfere,services%2C%20and%20maintenance%20of%20services.>