



Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD)

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (**FASD**) are a group of diagnosable medical conditions that can occur in a person who was exposed to alcohol before birth. As many as **1 in 20** Americans may have an FASD.¹ While there are many characteristics associated with FASD, each person with FASD has distinct challenges and strengths. Every person with FASD is unique.

Possible Characteristics of FASD²⁻⁴

Physical concerns

- Low body weight, problems with the heart, kidneys, or bones, poor coordination, vision or hearing problems

Learning challenges

- Difficulty with memory, learning disabilities, speech and language delays, intellectual disability

Behavioral issues

- Hyperactive behavior, impulsivity, emotional volatility, difficulty with attention, poor reasoning and judgment skills, trouble with executive functioning

Sensory differences

- Strong eating preferences, aversion to certain textures, easily distracted by auditory or visual stimuli, very sensitive or insensitive to pain

Social difficulties

- Difficulty with social cues like body language and facial expressions, dysmature social behavior, challenges with peer relationships

Strengths & Positive Traits

Research shows that family members of people with FASD often report a variety of strengths and positive qualities.⁵ Common strengths observed in individuals with FASD include: being loving, forming strong family connections, being sociable, desiring acceptance from others, showing trust, warmth, energy, and creativity.

Every person with FASD is unique.



Getting Support for FASD

- Getting an FASD diagnosis can help individuals and their loved ones better understand their strengths and challenges.
- Learning about FASD can be empowering and help to create more realistic goals and expectations.
- Early intervention services can be especially helpful for those ages 0-3.
- Connecting with other people with FASD and caregivers can be validating, supportive, and informative.





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Similar or Co-Occurring Conditions

People with FASD often receive incorrect diagnoses. One reason for this is that the characteristics of FASD appear similar to those of other conditions like autism or ADHD. It is also possible for someone with an FASD to have more than one diagnosable condition. In fact, nearly 9 in 10 people with FASD have at least one co-occurring condition,⁶ such as:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Bipolar Disorders
- Sensory Processing Disorder
- Oppositional Defiance Disorder
- Autism Spectrum Disorder

Getting an FASD Diagnosis

If you are seeking an FASD diagnosis for yourself or a family member, ask your healthcare provider for a referral to a specialist. Specialists could be a developmental pediatrician, psychologist, or clinical geneticist. In some cities, there are clinics whose staff members have special training in diagnosing and treating individuals with FASD. You can find a list of specialists in the [FASD United Resource Directory](#).

While there are many benefits to seeking an FASD diagnosis, it can be an emotional and challenging process for families. It may be helpful to connect with peers and support groups who understand what you are going through. The [FASD United Family Navigators](#) are here to support you through this process.



FASD United Family Navigators

- Navigators provide personalized one-on-one peer support, referrals to vetted resources and services, and assistance with medical, educational, and disability benefits.



Resource Directory

- Over 1,200 professionally vetted resources for all 50 states.



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

- Information about FASD, including stories from people with living experience.



Sources

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