

NEWS RELEASE

1 in 25 Canadians have this disability. And it can be prevented.

(Ottawa; August 27, 2020) Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) is a developmental disability that impacts 4% of Canadians. FASD often goes undiagnosed or is misdiagnosed, so the prevalence rate may be higher than the current estimate.

The key cause of FASD is exposure to alcohol during fetal development. But many social and health factors contribute to the risk of FASD beyond alcohol use. Women may drink during pregnancy because they may be unaware they are pregnant, they not know the risks of drinking alcohol during pregnancy, or they have substance use problems and related health and social challenges.

“To prevent FASD, we need to address both alcohol use in pregnancy and the range of health and social factors that contribute to women’s health and wellbeing” explains Dr. Nancy Poole, the Director of the Centre of Excellence for Women’s Health. “With awareness, supportive policies, and the right supports and services for women and their partners, FASD can be prevented.”

In the meantime, a greater awareness and understanding of FASD in Canada is needed. Despite it being more common than autism, cerebral palsy, and Down syndrome combined, FASD is not well understood by many Canadians.

“Individuals with FASD and their caregivers need supports and services to help them succeed. CanFASD is working with stakeholders to identify evidence-based best practices and encourage governments to address this issue in a strategic and collaborative way,” says Audrey McFarlane, Executive Director of the Canada FASD Research Network (CanFASD).

CanFASD is among many organizations celebrating [FASD Awareness Month](#) this September. They have launched a campaign called “*FASD is*”, encouraging Canadians to look beyond the stereotypes and understand what it truly means to have FASD.

“The hope is that with more understanding will come more action - action that will improve FASD prevention, intervention, and diagnosis in Canada,” says McFarlane.

About CanFASD:

CanFASD is Canada’s first national Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) research network. CanFASD works collaboratively with researchers and partners across the nation to address complexities of FASD. Our mission is to produce and maintain national, collaborative research for all Canadians, leading to prevention strategies and improved support services for people affected by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

To speak with a CanFASD expert regarding FASD Awareness Month, contact:

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