



Diagnosing Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders: What Families Need to Know

■ HOW DO I KNOW IF MY CHILD NEEDS TO BE EVALUATED?

When a child has a well-child visit, the pediatrician checks how the child is growing and learning. The doctor may also ask about what happened during pregnancy and childbirth.

One question that may come up is whether the child's mother drank alcohol while she was pregnant. This is called prenatal alcohol exposure (PAE), and it can cause physical, mental, behavioral, or learning disabilities.

If your child isn't growing and learning as expected—or if you are concerned about PAE—the pediatrician may recommend evaluating your child for fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs).

■ WHAT STEPS DO I NEED TO TAKE?

Your child's doctor will refer you to a specialist who is trained to diagnose and care for children with physical and behavioral delays. There may be someone in your pediatrician's office (called a care coordinator) who can help set up the appointment. A care coordinator will also make sure you have the information you need to be ready to see the specialist.

Before the appointment, be sure to gather any documents related to your child's challenges, like school reports, so you can share them with the specialist.

See additional information on reverse side.



American Academy of Pediatrics

DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



■ WHAT HAPPENS DURING EVALUATION FOR FASDS?

During the evaluation appointment, the specialist will:

- Ask about your family medical history, such as any health conditions that run in the family.
- Ask about your child's development, such as when he or she learned to walk or talk.
- Ask about your child's behavior, such as what his or her temper tantrums are like.
- Ask about any issues your child has with behavior, school performance, or mental health.
- Ask about the time during pregnancy, including the time before pregnancy was known about.
- Measure your child's height, weight, head size, and specific parts of the face.

Your child may need more than 1 appointment before receiving a diagnosis. For example, the specialist may suggest additional tests with a different professional, such as a counselor. Some clinics that focus on children with physical and behavioral delays can do all this testing as a single, extended appointment.

■ WHAT IF MY CHILD IS DIAGNOSED WITH A FASD?

If your child is diagnosed with a FASD, you're not alone. Taking steps early to get the right treatment and support for your child can help him or her do as well as possible in school and life.

Your pediatrician or care coordinator can help you find the information and services your family needs, including:

- Information on treatments (called interventions) that have been shown to help children with a FASD (bit.ly/2KntTGh).
- Practical tips to help make your home a supportive place for your child (nofas.org/resources).
- Ideas on how your family can work as a team with your child's doctors and teachers. Learn more about care coordination at HealthyChildren.org/TeamBasedCare.
- Referrals to services that are available under a federal law—called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)—including therapy to prevent new disabilities and resources to help your child in school.
- Information on local support groups and online communities (nofas.org/resources).

Where can I learn more?



National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders

nofas.org



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Facts about FASDs:
cdc.gov/ncbddd/fasd/facts.html



American Academy of Pediatrics Healthy Children Resources for Parents

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders – Frequently Asked Questions of Parents and Families: bit.ly/2BKyl7n

There's No 'I' in Teamwork:
AAP Policy Explained
HealthyChildren.org/TeamBasedCare

The information contained in this resource should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

This resource was supported by the Cooperative Agreement Number, NU38OT000167, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and prevention or the Department of Health and Human Services.