



Coalition of Alcohol and Drug Educators

**Dalgarno**  
INSTITUTE

Political Briefing

Media Briefing

Community Briefing

## Media & Community Briefing:

**9<sup>th</sup> Hour, 9<sup>th</sup> Day of  
the 9<sup>th</sup> Month –  
International Foetal  
Alcohol Spectrum  
Disorder Day 2021**  
An All of Community Issue



## 9<sup>th</sup> Hour, 9<sup>th</sup> Day of the 9<sup>th</sup> Month – International Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Day 2021

### Fast FASD Facts:

- ☑ **Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)** is an umbrella term used to describe a range of disabilities and effects that may arise from prenatal alcohol exposure, and it is widely recognized as the most common preventable cause of birth defects and brain damage in children.
- ☑ **FASD is the leading cause of mental retardation in western countries.**<sup>1</sup>
- ☑ **428 distinct disease conditions that co-occur in people with (FASD),**<sup>2</sup>
- ☑ **FASD has no cure but is 100% preventable!**<sup>3</sup>

Alcohol exposure *in utero* is the world's leading cause of neurodevelopmental (brain and nervous system) damage, learning disabilities and behavioural problems. FASD cannot be cured, reversed or outgrown, as it permanently compromises lives and life chances, e.g., by school failure, substance abuse, as well as being troubled and in trouble.

In fact, FASD is invisible in 90 per cent of the people affected and can be difficult to confirm, which means it is often misdiagnosed or simply overlooked – for instance, while the Scottish Government estimates that approximately 172,000 children, young and adults across Scotland are currently affected, there are between 500 and 1,000 undiagnosed FASD cases for every one officially confirmed.<sup>4</sup>

*“Alcohol is probably the worst of all of the drugs in terms of effects on the foetus...The data from human studies and from animal models is clear; alcohol consumption during pregnancy causes FAS/FASD, and there is no safe level of consumption and no safe time...Children—and adults—with FAS don't know how to estimate consequences for what they do, This can lead to problems with the law, in personal relationships and simply day-to-day functioning...This can lead to problems with the law, in personal relationships and simply day-to-day functioning.”* [Rajesh C. Miranda, PhD](#), professor at the Texas A&M Health Science Centre College of Medicine.<sup>5</sup>

In late 2020 research was published claiming direct links of FASD and the development of criminal conduct in children. This data echoes a widely held (but unverified) statistic that approximately 25% of all incarcerates in United State prisons were actually FASD sufferers. The following key points emerged from the report.

- *Experts are calling for all children in Australia's criminal justice system to be assessed for FASD*
- *It is believed up to 40 per cent of inmates in Australian prisons may have the disability, but most are undiagnosed*
- *A federal inquiry into FASD support, prevention and diagnosis is due to release its findings next month*<sup>6</sup>



## Not Just a 'Woman's' Issue

The burden is not all on the mother to be either. As far back as 2014 research has been pointing to this being more than a just a woman's responsibility.

*Alcohol consumption by an intimate partner can make it more difficult to quit during pregnancy, particularly if alcohol consumption patterns are associated with domestic violence. A number of animal studies also show that a male partner's alcohol consumption patterns may also directly contribute to [fetal developmental defects](#) and to [behavioral problems](#), because alcohol affects sperm cells as well. These studies mean that a child can be born affected by alcohol even if the mother has never had a drop.<sup>7</sup>*

*"Instead of focussing on 'irresponsible women who drink' we need to cast our net more broadly and develop policies in the population overall, including men"<sup>8</sup>*

On this issue and the Korean research, Criminal Lawyer Russell Goldflam stated.

*'[it] shows an embryo can be affected at the time of conception by compromised semen from men who drink excessively'. He also said the research could have profound implications on policy responses to FASD.<sup>9</sup>*

The Dalgarno Institute agrees. A wider preventative net needs to be cast on this 'seminal' issue and not only published research, but public information campaigns, should reflect these emerging realities to better inform men on this vital primary prevention issue.



***Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder is totally preventable if mothers-to-be do not drink alcohol and the men/fathers involved with the pregnant woman are also supportive and, preferably, alcohol free too.***



The recently released 2021 Australian National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) guidelines continue to reinforce, as they have done now for around 5 years now, that the safest option for babies in-vitro is for expectant or planning to be pregnant mums, to not drink any alcohol what-so-ever. However, they could have gone further and, at least, began to include the concerns around the male potential to help or hinder this prevention endeavour.

The very latest research coming out of JAMA Paediatrics in only July this year, add further weight to the need to broaden the FASD prevention campaign.

The paper [Paternal Alcohol Consumption Linked With Foetal Anomalies](#), whilst not directly referring to FASD did revealed important new data that only reinforces the need for all gender informing on this issue;

*Couples that reported paternal alcohol consumption had a 35% increased risk of having a baby with a birth defect (odds ratio, 1.35). This study suggests that paternal alcohol use prior to conception increases the risk of birth defects; the authors recommend further study to elucidate the highest risk consumption patterns*

It is time that our wider community, and not just the expectant families were made fully aware of the life-long outcomes of this incurable, but preventable disorder.

This FASD Day 2021 have that discussion with your partner, family and network. The greater the awareness the lower the risk.

For more go to [Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders](#)



**F.A.S.D. DAY**  
9<sup>TH</sup> HOUR 9<sup>TH</sup> DAY 9<sup>TH</sup> MONTH

**Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder**

- Tragically incurable, but
- Totally Preventable!

No drinking or other drug taking...

- When trying to get pregnant
- During Pregnancy
- Even during Breast Feeding

To give your baby a much better start to life!

Isabella's List  
proactive people  
preventative perspective  
Prevention for Life  
say no to alcohol

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NO BRAINER

Communications Team @ Dalgarno Institute 9.9.2021



## References

1. <http://come-over.to/FAS/FASDfacts.htm>
2. <http://m.medicalxpress.com/news/2016-01-conditions-co-occur-fetal-alcohol-spectrum.html>
3. Ibid 1
4. [Sex, alcohol and the COVID-19 pandemic](#)
5. <https://vitalrecord.tamhsc.edu/drinking-habits-of-men-and-women-may-cause-fetal-alcohol-syndrome/>
6. [Link between Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and youth crime sparks calls for change](#)
7. Ibid 5
8. [Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder inquiry told men drinking could be as much to blame as women - ABC News](#)
9. Criminal lawyer Russell Goldflam <http://mobile.abc.net.au/news/2014-08-01/foetal-alcohol-inquiry-told-men-as-much-to-blame-as-women/5642356>

