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## Fetal Alcohol Syndrome: An Overview

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Fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) is a condition that happens when a mother drinks alcohol during pregnancy. The effects on the child can include physical, mental, and behavioral problems. Some problems may be mild while others may greatly affect the child's everyday functioning. These complications are not reversible, and there is no cure, but FAS is preventable.

### Signs of FAS include:



- Distinctive facial features, including small eyes, an exceptionally thin upper lip, a short, upturned nose and a smooth skin surface between the nose and upper lip



- Heart defects
- Deformities of joints, limbs and fingers
- Slow physical growth before and after birth



- Vision difficulties or hearing problems
- Small head circumference and brain size (microcephaly)
- Poor coordination



- Sleep problems
- Intellectual disability and delayed development
- Learning disorders



- Abnormal behavior, such as a short attention span, hyperactivity, poor impulse control, extreme nervousness and anxiety (Mayo Clinic, 2009, Symptoms page)



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(cont.)

## How Is FAS Diagnosed?

Diagnosis of FAS can occur only after the baby is born. To make a diagnosis of FAS, a doctor will look at several factors.

### Diagnosing FAS includes:

- Growth
- Facial features
- Heart defects
- Hearing
- Vision
- Cognitive ability
- Language development
- Motor skills
- Behavior (Mayo Clinic, 2009, Tests and diagnosis page)



When FAS is found early, it can allow children to receive early intervention and treatment for their needs. Treatment may include surgery for defects, special services such as special education, and counseling for the family. To learn more about FAS, go to:

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/fetal-alcohol-syndrome/DS00184>

#### Resources:

Mayo Clinic. (2009). Fetal alcohol syndrome. Retrieved from <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/fetal-alcohol-syndrome/DS00184>

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