

# How to Talk About FASD

tips for community members



September 9th is the International FASD Awareness Day. First celebrated in 1999, FASD day is devoted to raising awareness of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) to improve prevention of FASD and diagnosis and support for individuals with FASD.

FASD is a complex disorder and one that is challenging to talk about. We want to ensure the language we use is supportive and doesn't further perpetuate stigma and misinformation surrounding FASD, alcohol, and pregnancy.

Throughout the month of September, events are held across Canada and around the world in recognition of FASD Day. If you are asked to attend such an event or activity, this guide is to assist you in delivering an effective speech to your constituents. Contact us at [info@canfasd.ca](mailto:info@canfasd.ca) if you require any additional information.

*Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a diagnostic term used to describe impacts on the brain and body of individuals prenatally exposed to alcohol. FASD is a lifelong disability. Individuals with FASD will experience some degree of challenges in their daily living, and need support with motor skills, physical health, learning, memory, attention, communication, emotional regulation, and social skills to reach their full potential. Each individual with FASD is unique and has areas of both strengths and challenges.*

## When talking about people with FASD

### AVOID

Suffering with FASD  
Damaged by alcohol  
Victims  
Injured  
Afflicted by  
Mentally disabled

### USE

Person/individual with FASD  
Affected/Impacted by prenatal alcohol use  
Cognitive/neurodevelopmental disability  
Disability

## When talking about women who use alcohol

### AVOID

Admitted to alcohol use  
Alcoholics/addicts  
Women who choose to drink  
Don't care about their children  
Bad parents  
Poor choices  
Irresponsible  
Child abusers

### USE

Confirmed alcohol use during pregnancy  
Women who use alcohol or drugs  
Parents or caregivers

## FASD Facts

- FASD impacts approximately 4% of Canadians.
- FASD impacts more people in Canada than Autism Spectrum Disorder, Cerebral Palsy, and Down syndrome combined.
- Individuals with FASD are known for having a number of different strengths, including being friendly, likeable, affectionate, determined, hard-working, forgiving, non-judgemental and caring.
- 90% of individuals with FASD also experience mental health issues.
- The social and economic cost of FASD in Canada is estimated to be \$1.8 billion annually.
- Individuals with FASD achieve positive outcomes if their needs and challenges are addressed early on in life and they have access to supports that carry into adulthood.



**Avoid:** FASD is 100% preventable

*This is an oversimplification of a very complex issue*

**Use:** FASD is preventable with the right services and supports

**Avoid:** Just one drink can cause FASD

*There is no clinical evidence this is true. This statement can scare women using substances and prevent them from seeking supports.*

**Use:** It is safest not to drink during pregnancy or when you're planning to be pregnant

**Avoid:** Focusing on the difficulties faced by individuals with FASD and the costs to society

*A continual focus on the challenges creates a belief that these are the main attributes of individuals with FASD.*

**Use:** A more balanced approach or on how supports and adaptations can improve outcomes for individuals with FASD

**Avoid:** FASD is caused by maternal alcohol use

*We want to reduce the stigma for women who have drunk during this time and encourage them to seek supports for their child.*

**Use:** FASD is caused by prenatal alcohol exposure or when a developing baby is exposed to alcohol