# Everything you need to know about Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)

With FASD Awareness Month coming up in September, we’ve got all the answers to your questions about Australia’s leading preventable developmental disability.

#### What is Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)?

Alcohol consumed at any stage of pregnancy passes directly to the developing baby and can damage their brain, body, and organs. It can lead to a lifelong disability, FASD.

FASD is the leading preventable developmental disability in Australia.

Not drinking any alcohol during pregnancy will prevent FASD. No safe level of alcohol consumption during pregnancy has been found, which is why the moment you start trying for a baby is the moment to stop drinking alcohol.

If it’s difficult for you to stop drinking alcohol, help is available. Speak to your doctor, midwife, or obstetrician for support. You can also speak with an alcohol support service.

#### What challenges can people living with FASD experience?

The experience of each person with FASD is unique.

A person living with FASD has their own individual strengths and challenges, but all experience some degree of difficulty in everyday life and will likely need additional support.

People living with FASD can:

* Be impulsive or have challenges with understanding and learning from consequences.
* Have difficulty managing responses to sensory stimuli, which result in them becoming overwhelmed or distressed in busy environments.
* Have challenges with regulating their emotions and need a caregiver or other adult to support them through this.
* Demonstrate delayed language development, impacting their ability to communicate their thoughts or needs, and participate in conversations with family, peers, and others.
* Find social interactions and activities difficult.

Learn more about common behavioural symptoms and signs of FASD on the [NOFASD website.](https://www.nofasd.org.au/)

#### How is FASD diagnosed?

A diagnosis of FASD requires an assessment of the extent of physical or developmental delay, neurological impairment, and alcohol exposure during pregnancy.

For FASD to be diagnosed, a health professional must identify impairment in at least three of ten specified domains of central nervous system structure or function.

A timely diagnosis of FASD can help to ensure a person receives the care and support they need to reach their full potential. It also assists families and support networks in learning about FASD and the challenges it may present.

To find a FASD-informed healthcare provider, search the FASD Hub Services Directory.

#### What is FASD Awareness Month and Red Shoes Rock?

September is [International FASD Awareness Month](https://redshoesrock.org.au/).

Every September, we wear red shoes (or socks) to spark conversations about FASD.

It all started in 2013, when Canadian RJ Formanek, who lives with FASD, started wearing red shoes as a conversation starter to talk about this invisible disability.

In 2014 Jodee Kulp, a graphic designer, stepped in to help him build visibility and get the word out.

Jodee’s daughter Liz lived with FASD and was a passionate advocate working to create a world where FASD is better understood and prevented.

Now, the campaign is recognised around the world.

[Learn more about red shoes rock](https://redshoesrock.org.au/)