

# Characteristics Shared by FASD and Other Disorders

Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD). FASD includes birth defects, brain injury and disabilities. People with FASD often receive incorrect diagnoses. This is because many of the effects of FASD look similar to those of other disorders, such as ADHD. Another reason is that people with FASD often have more than 1 disorder; this is called having co-occurring conditions. Nearly 9 in 10 people with FASD have at least one co-occurring condition. Because of this, it is important that health care providers regularly consider FASD in the diagnosis and management of mental illnesses and developmental disorders.

It is important to note that FASD and other disorders can have very different effects on each person impacted. Not everyone with the diagnoses below will have all of the effects listed.

EFFECTS	FASD	ADHD	AUTISM	BIPOLAR DISORDER	REACTIVE ATTACHMENT DISORDER	DEPRESSION	OPPOSITIONAL DEFIANT DISORDER
SENSITIVITY TO LIGHT, NOISE AND TOUCH	X		X				
IRRITABILITY	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
DIFFICULTY SLEEPING	X	X	X	X		X	
POOR MEMORY	X	X	X	X	X	X	
HYPERACTIVITY	X	X	X	X	X		
SEEMS TO HAVE NO FEAR	X		X				
SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DELAYS	X		X				



EFFECTS	FASD	ADHD	AUTISM	BIPOLAR DISORDER	REACTIVE ATTACHMENT DISORDER	DEPRESSION	OPPOSITIONAL DEFIANT DISORDER
POOR SOCIAL SKILLS	X	X	X		X	X	X
EASILY DISTRACTED, SHORT ATTENTION SPAN	X	X	X	X		X	
DIFFICULTY IN SCHOOL	X	X	X			X	X
LOW SELF-ESTEEM	X	X	X	X		X	
INVOLVEMENT WITH THE JUSTICE SYSTEM	X	X	X				X
POOR IMPULSE CONTROL	X	X	X	X	X		X
MUST BE REMINDED OF CONCEPTS ON A DAILY BASIS	X						
POOR REASONING AND JUDGEMENT SKILLS	X	X		X	X	X	
DIFFICULTY WITH CHANGE IN ROUTINE OR SWITCHING TASKS	X	X	X		X		
OFTEN SHOWS EXTREME BEHAVIOR	X	X	X	X	X		X
HAS TROUBLE REMEMBERING RULES	X						
HAS DIFFICULTY KEEPING A JOB	X	X	X	X		X	X

\*This fact sheet is for families and professionals to use as an informative resource. It is not intended to replace professional medical, psychological, behavioral, legal, nutritional or educational counsel.

This document is inspired by and based off a [fact sheet originally created by Cathy Bruer-Thompson](#), former Proof Alliance board vice president and special needs adoption trainer.

