Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is a condition caused by alcohol exposure before birth. It is a life-long condition that results in cognitive, physical and behavioural disabilities, including difficulties with:

- learning
- language
- planning
- memory
- motor skills
- controlling emotions

Not all babies exposed to alcohol during pregnancy will develop FASD, but there is no safe level of alcohol use during pregnancy.

**Early diagnosis of FASD is vital** to supporting families, but sometimes shame and stigma can stop families from seeking help.

Drinking alcohol during pregnancy is a concern for all Australians. In 2019[1],

- 55% of women in the total population reported drinking alcohol before they knew they were pregnant.
- 15% continued to drink after they knew they were pregnant.

In 2018-19, around 9% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women reported alcohol use during pregnancy[2].

While alcohol use is less common among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women than non-Indigenous women, for those who do drink – alcohol use is more likely to be at a risky level.

**FASD is completely preventable**

To prevent FASD, it is important that:

- communities have a say on liquor licences
- partners and family members support women during pregnancy
- culturally safe programs and resources are accessible to encourage families to get the support they need.

However, **more needs to be done to increase awareness and understanding of FASD** and how it affects the whole community.

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