NCADD
NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE, INC.

NIH Statement on International FASD Awareness Day

Wednesday, 03 September 2014 16:05

International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) Awareness Day, recognized every year on Sept. 9th, is an important reminder that prenatal alcohol exposure is the leading preventable cause of birth defects and developmental disorders in the United States.

Almost 40 years have passed since we recognized that drinking during pregnancy can result in a wide range of disabilities for children, of which fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) is the most severe. Yet, 1 in 13 pregnant women report drinking in the past 30 days. Of those, about 1 in 6 report binge drinking during that time.

The disabilities associated with FASD can persist throughout life and place heavy emotional and financial burdens on individuals, their families, and society. FASD often brings to mind the distinct pattern of facial features associated with FAS, such as wide-set and narrow eyes, a smooth ridge on the upper lip, and a thin upper lip border. We now understand, however, that the neurobehavioral effects associated with FASD, such as intellectual disabilities, speech and language delays, and poor social skills, can exist without the classic defining facial characteristics.

For many years, the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism has supported research to understand how alcohol exposure during pregnancy interferes with fetal development and how FASD can be identified and prevented. Scientists continue to make tremendous strides, providing important new insights into the nature of FASD and potential intervention and treatment strategies.

The message is simple, not just on Sept. 9, but every day. There is no known safe level of drinking while pregnant. Women who are, who may be, or who are trying to become pregnant, should not drink alcohol.

Statement by George Koob, Ph.D., director, & Kenneth R. Warren, Ph.D., deputy director National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

Learn more about alcohol and pregnancy by clicking here.

Click here to learn what NCADD has to say about FASD.