



Western Cape  
Government

Health

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Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)  
No amount of alcohol is safe during pregnancy.



## **1. What is FASD?**

- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) is a group of birth defects that is only found in babies of mothers who use alcohol during pregnancy.

## **2. How is FASD prevented?**

- FASD is 100% preventable. No alcohol for mom during pregnancy then no FASD for baby.
- FASD is 100% permanent. The damage done by the alcohol cannot be undone.

## **3. What is the safest choice?**

- The safest choice for your unborn baby is not to drink any alcohol when you are pregnant.

## **What is FASD?**

**Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) is a group of birth defects that can occur can occur in a person who has been exposed to alcohol before birth.**

## **How is FASD prevented?**

FASD is 100% preventable.

No alcohol for mom during pregnancy then no FASD for baby.

FASD is 100% permanent.

The damage done by the alcohol cannot be undone.

**The safest choice for your unborn baby is not to drink any alcohol when you are pregnant.**

**1. How does alcohol get to the unborn baby?**

- Alcohol enters the bloodstream. The blood takes the alcohol to the unborn baby.

**2. How does alcohol harm the unborn baby?**

- Alcohol damages the unborn baby's growing body and brain resulting in many types of birth defects.

**3. Will it make a difference if a pregnant woman stops drinking anytime during the pregnancy?**

- It is best to stop drinking alcohol when you are planning to have a baby
- Alcohol harms an unborn baby in different ways at different times during the pregnancy.
- If you stop drinking alcohol at any stage it will make a difference to the baby.

**4. Will the baby get FASD if the mother does not drink alcohol?**

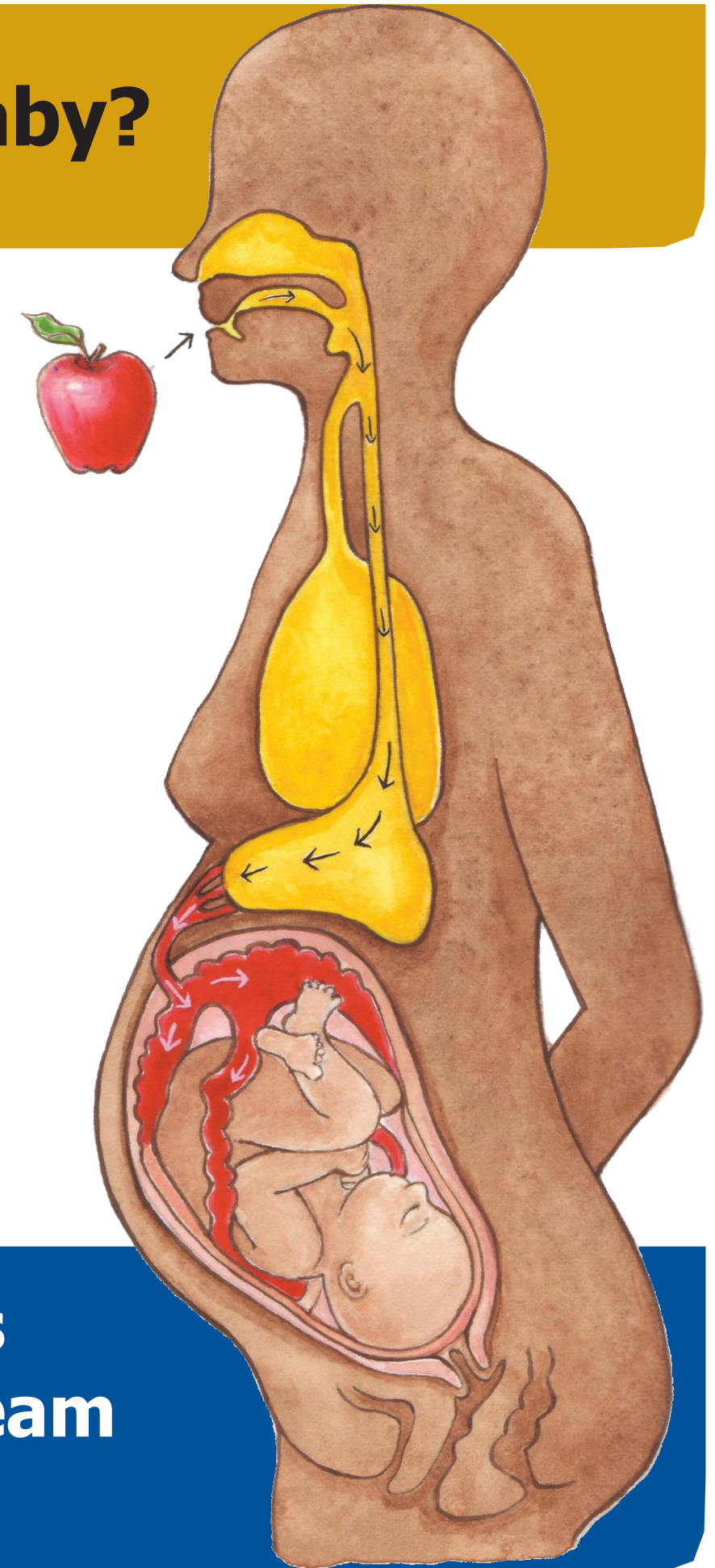
- The baby will not get FASD if the mother does not drink alcohol.

# How does alcohol get to the unborn baby?

Everything you eat, drink or smoke passes through to your baby

- When a pregnant woman drinks, the alcohol goes into her blood stream.
- The blood carries the alcohol to the unborn baby.
- The alcohol can damage the unborn baby's growing body and brain.
- Alcohol can cause many types of birth abnormalities.

**Everything the mother eats and drinks goes into her stomach and through the bloodstream to the unborn baby in the womb.**



## **1. What are the dangers of alcohol?**

- Alcohol is a powerful drug
- Many people drink alcohol without knowing what harm it can do to their bodies.
- People are taking risks with their own health when they drink too much alcohol.
- When a pregnant woman drinks alcohol, the baby drinks alcohol too. Alcohol causes damage to unborn babies.

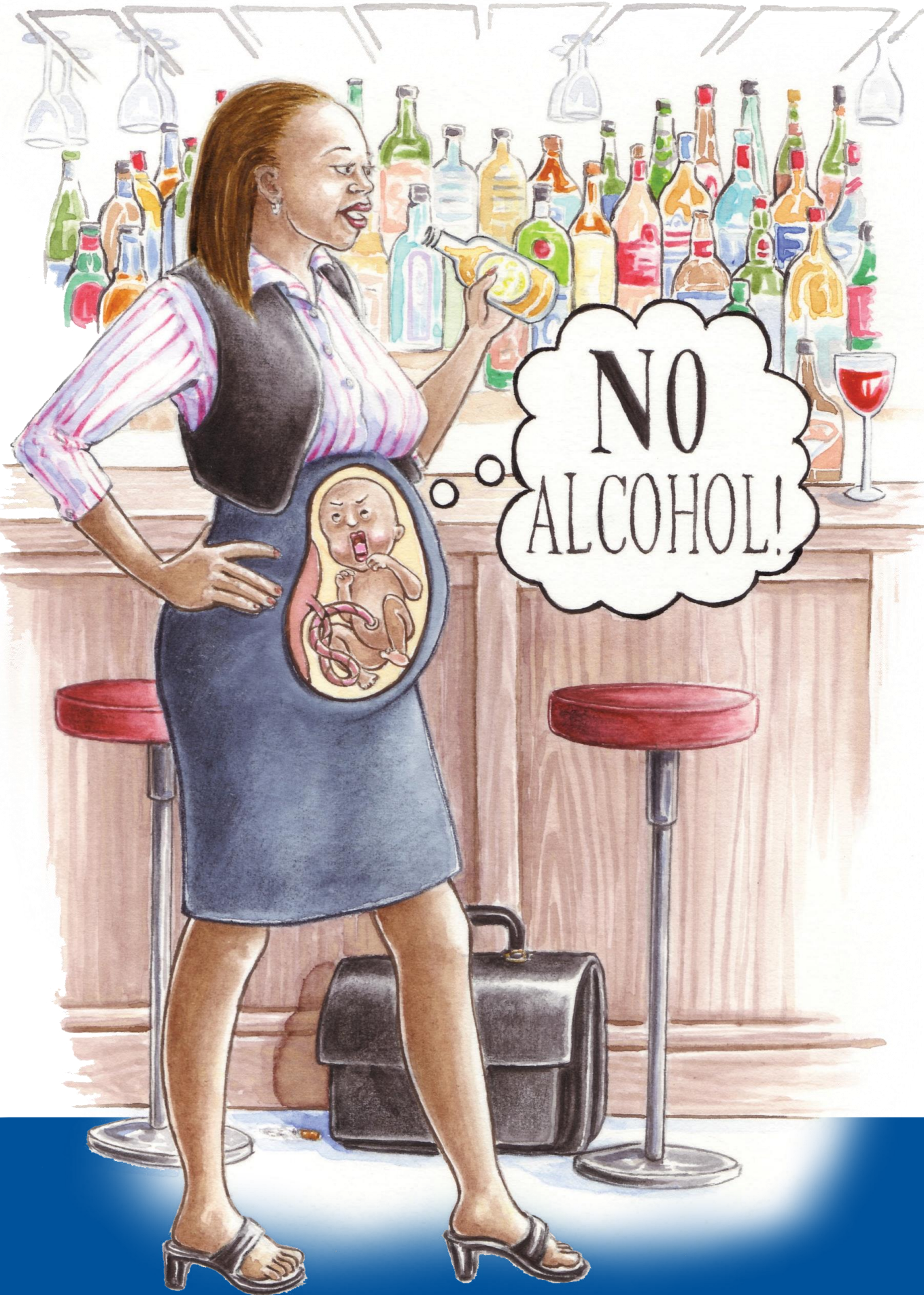
## **2. Will alcohol always harm the baby?**

- Alcohol can harm an unborn baby in different ways at different times during pregnancy.
- Alcohol can cause damage to the unborn baby even before the woman knows she is pregnant.
- Alcohol can continue to harm the baby until the baby is born and afterwards if the mother is breastfeeding.
- It is never too late to stop drinking alcohol during pregnancy.
- No amount of alcohol is safe for the unborn baby.

## **3. Can all types of alcohol harm the baby?**

- Yes, any and all types of alcohol can cause birth defects:  
Beer, wine, ciders, spirits, spirit coolers, milk stout, beer, vodka, gin, brandy, whisky, sherry, alcoholic coolers and shandies – ALL TYPES OF ALCOHOL CAN DO HARM.





**Are all types  
of alcohol  
dangerous to  
unborn babies?**

**All types of alcohol can  
cause birth defects**



# **How does alcohol affect the brain and development of unborn babies?**

**This chart shows how the unborn baby can be affected by alcohol.**

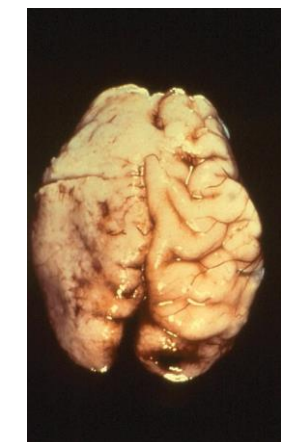
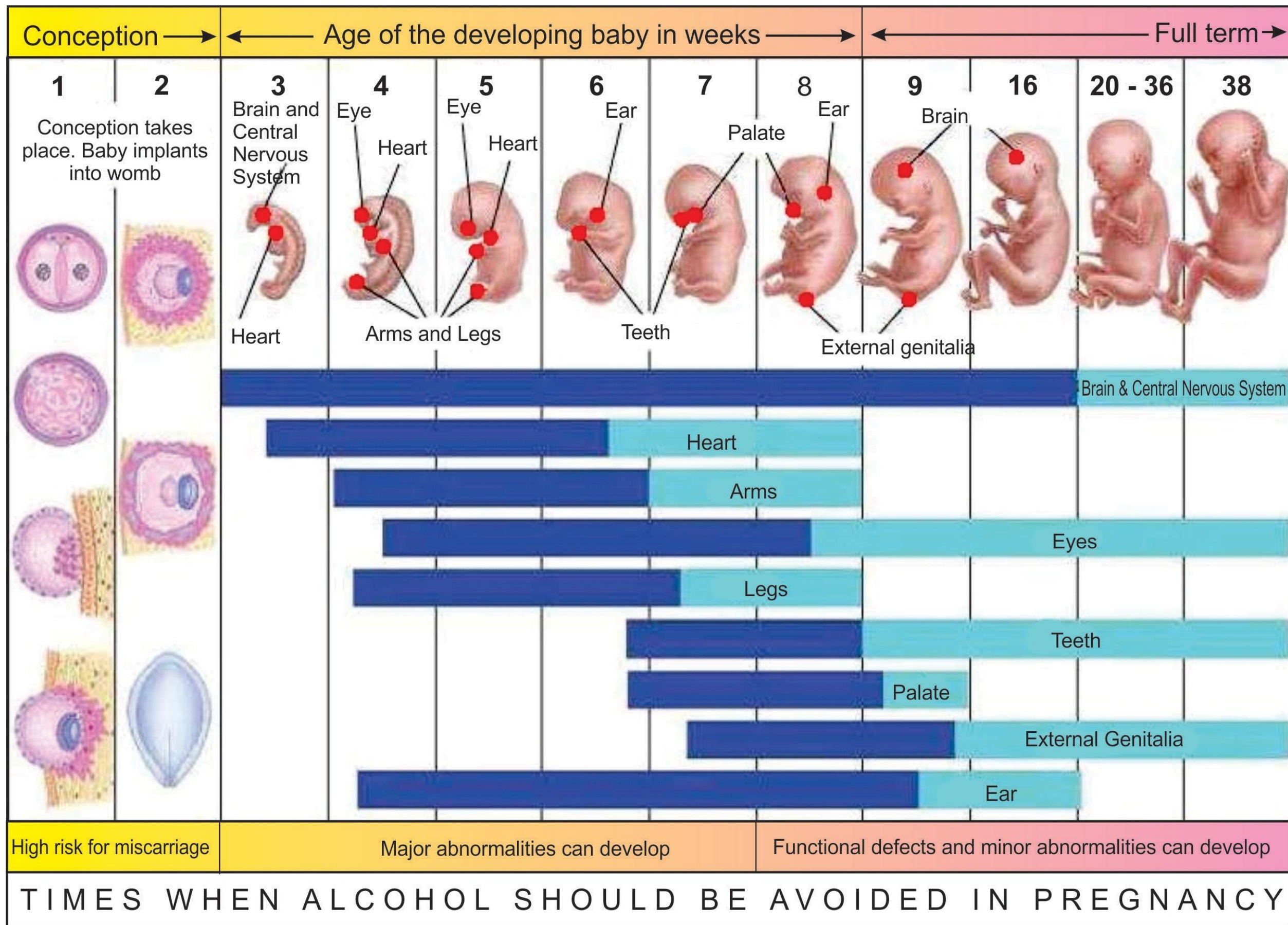
- 1. Ask a few women when they found out they were pregnant. Show that time on the chart and discuss what parts of the body were developing then.**
- 2. At which age does the central nervous system and brain develop?**
  - Brain and central nervous system develop the entire pregnancy. Alcohol drunk during pregnancy will damage the brain and central nervous system of the unborn baby. This can lead to functional problems eg behaviour problems, difficulty at school.
- 3. When do the eyes develop?**
  - From 4 to 8 weeks
- 4. When do the ears develop?**
  - From 3 to 9 weeks
- 5. When is it safe for a pregnant woman to drink alcohol?**
  - It is never safe to drink any alcohol at any time during pregnancy. The unborn baby will be affected by alcohol taken at any time.

## **Picture of brain**

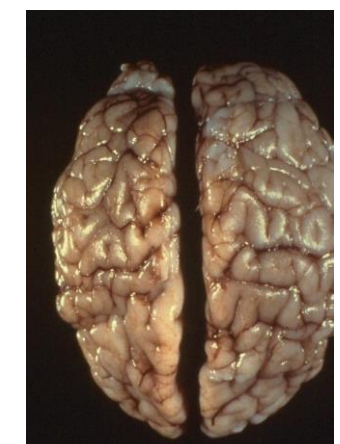
- 6. What do you notice about the two brains?**
  - The brain affected by alcohol is smaller.
  - Alcohol damages the brain.
- 7. Do FASD babies develop like normal babies?**
  - A FASD baby can be born early before his/her due date.
  - These babies have a low birth weight.
  - They are slow in reaching milestones e.g. sitting, walking, talking.



# How does alcohol affect the brain and development of the unborn baby?



Brain affected by alcohol



Normal brain

Note: The dark blue bars indicate time periods when major abnormalities can occur, the light blue bars show the periods at risk for minor abnormalities and functional defects.

**1. Where do you go if you are worried your baby/child has FASD?**

- Go to the clinic and ask that your child be tested.

**2. Who can say if a child has FASD?**

- A specially trained doctor using sophisticated tests can determine if a child has FASD.

**3. What will the specialist want to know from the mother?**

- The mother's history – did she drink alcohol during pregnancy?
- How much alcohol did she drink and for how long?
- Was the baby born prematurely?
- What was the baby's birth weight?
- The head circumference of the baby.

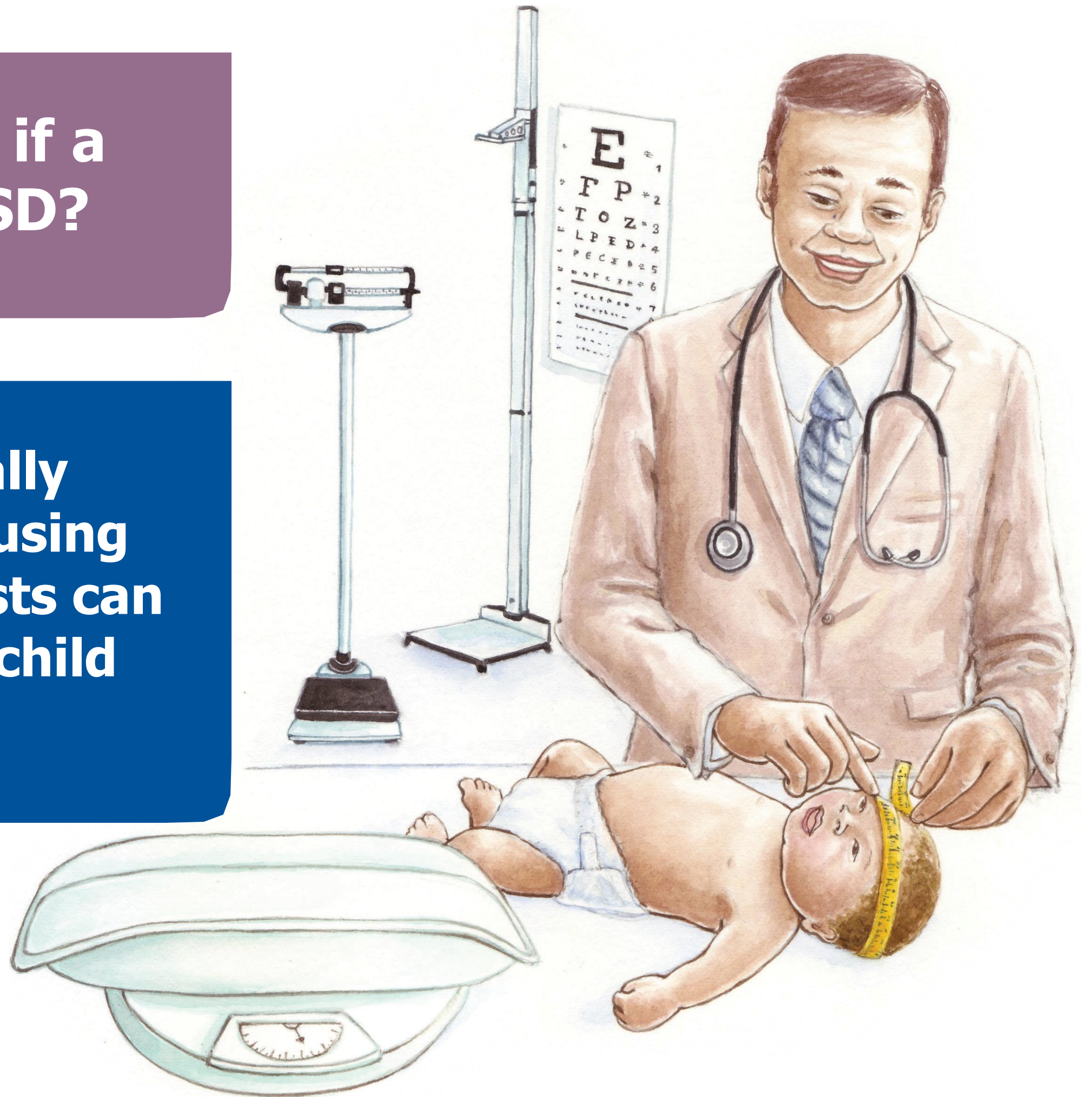
**4. What will the specialist check with the baby?**

- Physical measurements eg. weight, height, eye shape, mouth shape and head circumference .
- Behaviour of the baby eg. hyperactivity, irritability, poor appetite, disturbed sleeping.



**Who can say if a child has FASD?**

**Only a specially trained doctor using sophisticated tests can determine if a child has FASD.**



# **How can I have a healthy baby?**

## **1. Why should a pregnant woman make all this effort?**

- You want the best for your baby so look after yourself and your unborn baby in a responsible way which will mean having a safe delivery. Your baby will be healthier and will have a good start to life.

## **2. Why should a pregnant woman stop smoking during pregnancy?**

- Babies born to mothers who smoke have a low birth weight
- They are sickly
- They have chest problems eg. asthma.

## **3. Why should a pregnant woman stop taking drugs during pregnancy?**

- Drugs affect the health and brain of a baby.

## **4. Discuss each balloon**



**How can  
I have a  
healthy  
baby?**



**Get the  
support of  
your family  
and friends.**

# Breast milk and alcohol and the Benefits of Breastfeeding for the baby and for the mother

## 1. Why is breast milk so important for a child's health?

- Breast milk is the perfect food that is made especially for your baby.
- Breast milk contains all the nourishment your baby needs for the first 6 months of life.
- Breast milk protects babies against infections, allergies and diarrhoea.
- Breast milk is clean and safe.
- Breast milk does not cost anything
- Breast milk is always available in the right quantity and at the right temperature.

## 2. What is exclusive breastfeeding?

- Exclusive breastfeeding means that only breast milk should be given to your baby from birth to 6 months of age.
- Do not give water or any other liquids to your baby.
- Do not introduce food or formula before your baby is 6 months of age.

## 3. Will the baby be affected if the mother drinks alcohol when she is breastfeeding?

- The alcohol the mother drinks is carried through the breast milk to the baby when the mother is breastfeeding.
- The breast milk can smell and taste of alcohol and babies can stop breastfeeding because they do not like the taste.

- Not drinking breast milk can lead to the baby losing weight.
- The baby may not thrive.
- The baby's growth can be stunted.
- The baby may not grow and develop, as it should for the baby's age.

## 4. Can alcohol in breast milk give a baby FASD?

- The brain and physical development of a baby can be affected by the alcohol in breast milk.

## 5. What can the breastfeeding mother do if she knows she is going to drink alcohol?

- The mother can express her breast milk into a clean container with a lid before she drinks alcohol.
- This breast milk must be stored in the fridge after being expressed.
- The mother, caregiver or child minder can then give the expressed breast milk to the baby in a cup.
- It is best to wait for 4 hours after drinking alcohol before breastfeeding again.

## 6. What is the important message re breastmilk and alcohol?

- Do not drink alcohol if you are breastfeeding your baby or feeding your baby breast milk.
- Drinking alcohol or beverages containing alcohol when breastfeeding can harm the brain, the sleep, the learning, the development and the growth of the baby.



## Can alcohol in breast milk give a baby FASD?

Breast is best for baby.

Thanks Mom for making the healthiest choice.

The brain and physical development of a baby can be affected by the alcohol in breast milk.

## **What is the role of the man when his female partner is pregnant?**

### **Discuss each banner:**

- Persuade her not to drink.
- Encourage her to go for help if she cannot stop drinking.
- Respect her wish when she decides not to drink.
- Help the pregnant woman to enjoy alcohol free activities.
- Ban alcohol from your house.
- Speak to a man you trust to learn how to be a better husband and father.
- Show solidarity! Give up alcohol for 9 months.
- Celebrate special occasions without alcohol.
- Planning a baby? Ban alcohol.



**What is the role of the man when his female partner is pregnant?**

**Speak to a man you trust to learn how to be a better husband and father.**



**Give a baby a chance: No alcohol during pregnancy.**



# Where do I go for help?

## 1. **Primary Health Care Nurse**

- at clinic/ community health centre

## 2. **Social worker**

- to discuss home conditions

## 3. **Religious Leader**

- Support and guidance

## 4. **NGO's eg Alcoholics Anonymous, SANCA, City Matrix Sites**

- Get help with controlling alcohol intake, drug misuse and smoking.

## 5. **Community Structures**

- Support groups
- Women's groups

## 6. **Places of worship**

## 7. **Where else in my community can I go for help with my FASD child?**

- Contact the FAS Info Centre (FASIC) at 082 5099 530



# Where do I go for help?

If you need help to control your alcohol intake, drug misuse and smoking then speak to:



Local community structures  
eg women's groups



Social worker  
Mental health nurse



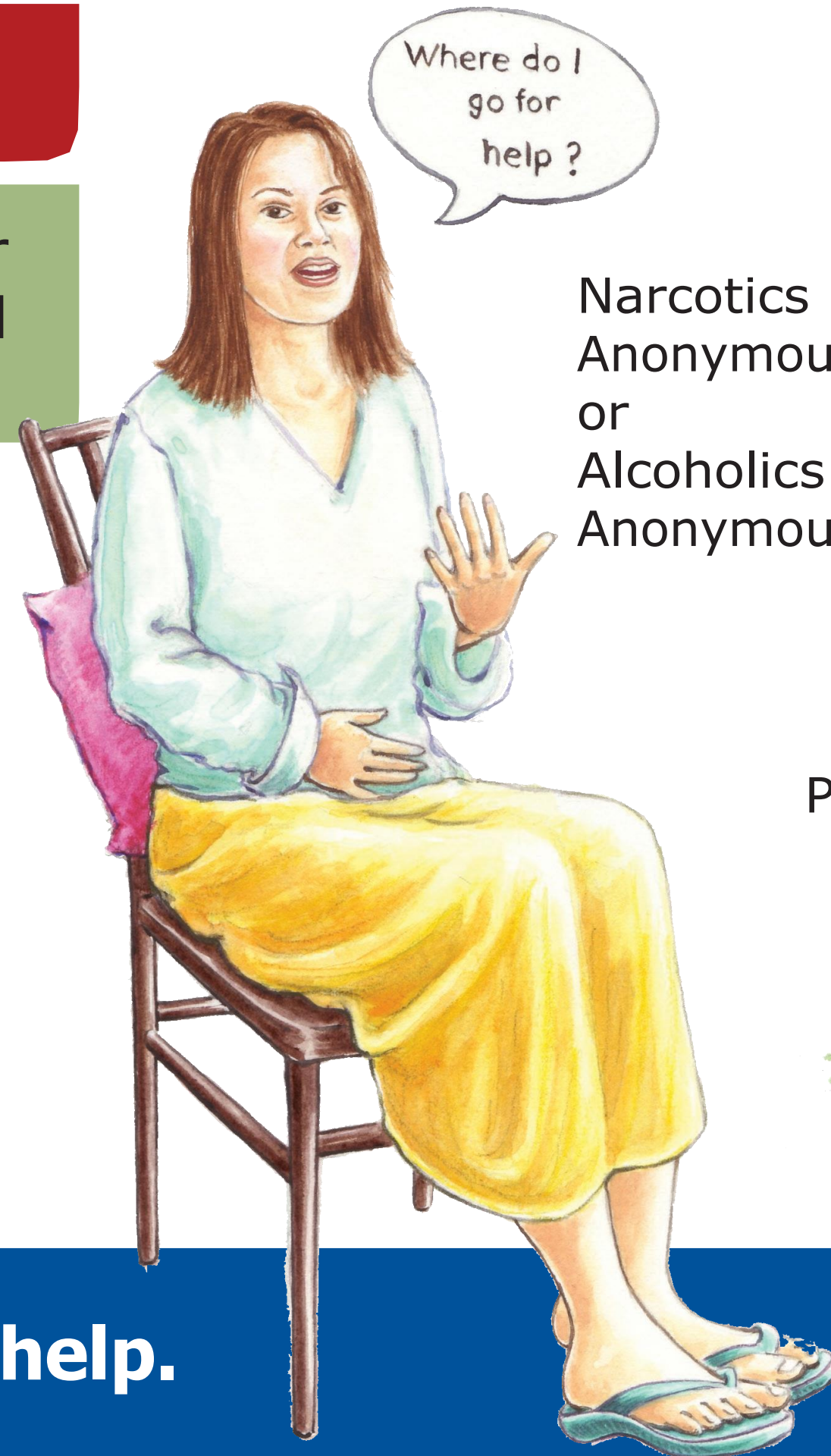
Narcotics  
Anonymous  
or  
Alcoholics  
Anonymous

Places of worship



Religious  
leader

**Don't go it alone. Seek help.**



## **1. How does a child with FASD cope at school?**

- A child with FASD does not cope well at school. They find it difficult to concentrate and have to be taught the same skills many times. It is important to have a child assessed early so that help can be given. They have difficulty knowing right from wrong. FASD children will have physical and intellectual problems their entire lives.

## **2. How can I assist my child who has FASD?**

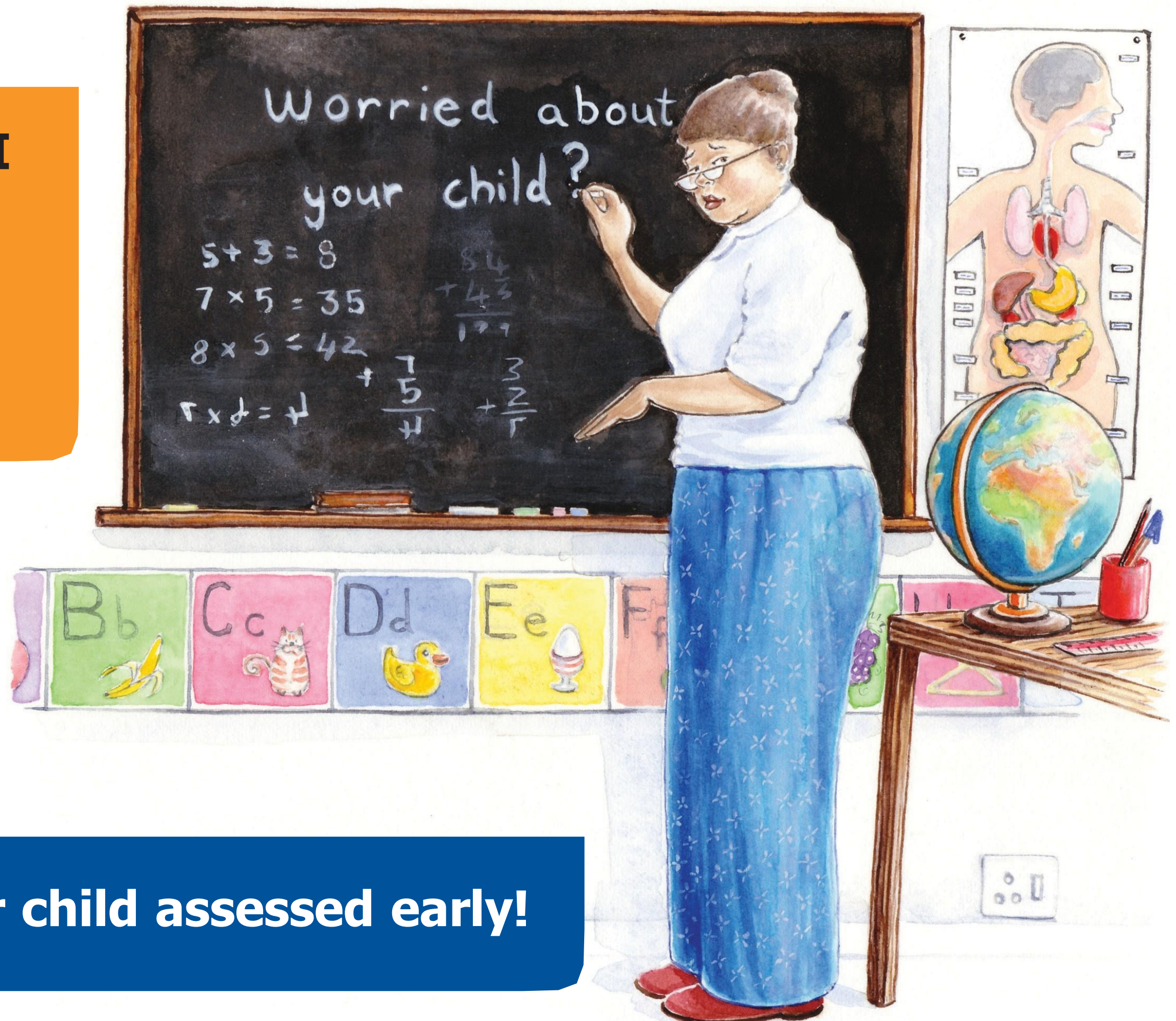
- Go to the primary health care clinic and ask for the child to be referred for assessment.
- Referral could be for physical and mental disabilities and also for special schooling
- Sheltered workshop
- Residential home

## **3. What may the future hold for my FASD child?**

- Be prepared to consider, in the future, that your FASD child may have to be placed in a sheltered workshop or a residential home.
- As they are easily persuaded they may land in trouble with the law.
- Be committed to giving your child long term care.



**How can I  
support  
my child  
who has  
FASD?**



**Have your child assessed early!**



## **1. What is International FASD Day?**

- FASD is International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Day celebrated every year on 9 Sept.

## **2. Why are bells rung at 09:09 on 9 September?**

- Annually at nine minutes past nine on 9 September, people are encouraged to ring bells as part of the international call for each time zone across the world to create awareness and focus attention on the fact that any alcohol drunk by women during the nine months of pregnancy, will affect the unborn baby.
- If you don't have a bell you can ring door bells, cellphones, jingle keys or stamp your feet – make a noise to spread the FASD message.

## **3. What is the FASD message you must tell others?**

- No alcohol during pregnancy means the unborn baby will not have FASD.





**International FASD Day:  
9 September.**

**Now you know the  
FASD message.**

**Go and tell others.**

**No alcohol in pregnancy = No FASD**

## **Training material developed by FASD Task Team.**

FOUNDATION FOR ALCOHOL RELATED RESEARCH (FARR)

Tel: 021-686 2646

Web: [www.farrsa.org.za](http://www.farrsa.org.za)

FETAL ALCOHOL SYNDROME INFORMATION CENTRE (FASIC)

Tel: 082 5099 530

email: [fasinfocentre@mweb.co.za](mailto:fasinfocentre@mweb.co.za)

PEBBLES PROJECT

Tel: 072 4722 797

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