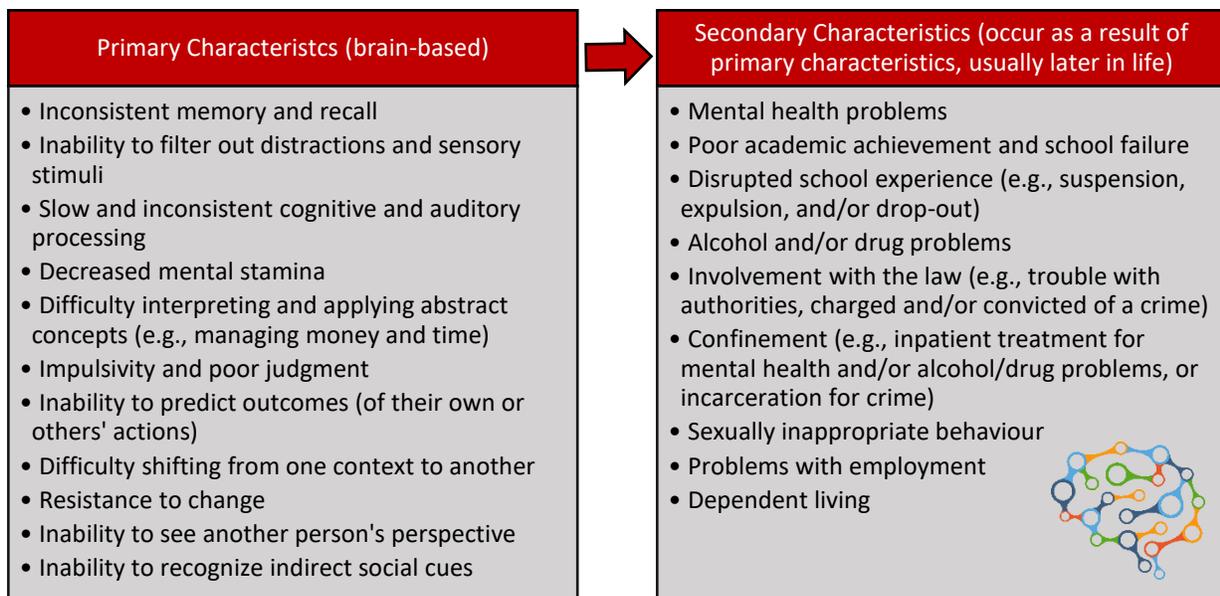


**Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)** is a diagnostic term used to describe the effects of prenatal alcohol exposure on an individual’s brain and body. It is caused by prenatal exposure to alcohol.

**Impacts** vary from mild to severe affecting the central nervous system, facial features, growth, behaviour, learning and memory. Additional medical problems of the heart, kidneys, bones and/or hearing may also be present. An overall presentation of dysmaturity (i.e., varying levels of maturity in development) is common, such as expressive and receptive language, social and self-care skills, and emotional regulation.

**FASD is known as an “invisible” disability since most affected individuals do not display facial features.**

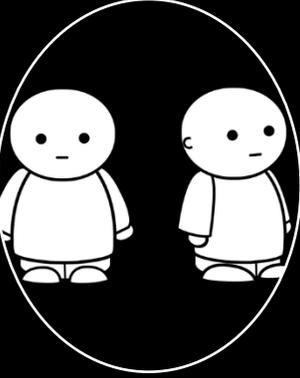
**Signs and symptoms** are most commonly broken down into two domains. Primary characteristics reflect the underlying central nervous system damage caused by prenatal exposure to alcohol. Secondary characteristics are features that usually occur later on in life typically as a result of the primary characteristics. Not all characteristics apply to every individual with FASD.



**Diagnosis** is given solely by a medical doctor, usually following a medical and multi-disciplinary team assessment with a psychologist, occupational therapist, speech-language pathologist. A diagnosis will specify either FASD with or without sentinel facial features associated with prenatal alcohol exposure. In Manitoba, all referrals are made and processed through the Manitoba FASD Network. Individuals from every socioeconomic status and ethnic background can have FASD and early identification and intervention is critical, as it may lessen the impact of secondary characteristics.

**Intervention** must consider the unique needs of each individual, their family, and community resources; no single method addresses FASD. Intervention support may require medical care/specialists, behavioural and educational support, parent support, holistic approaches (e.g., art/music therapy, meditation), and medication.

**School/Home Strategies** require consistency and adaptations as children and youth develop. These may include:

 <p><b>Executive Functioning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Repetition and recall strategies (e.g., mnemonics)</li><li>• External thinking processes (e.g., checklists)</li><li>• Behavioural cues (e.g., wristband reminders)</li><li>• Organizational support (e.g., in/out baskets; break up assignments)</li><li>• Routine and structure (e.g., visual schedule; warnings of transitions and changes)</li></ul>	 <p><b>Learning Environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Brief, clear, and concrete expectations reviewed frequently</li><li>• Preferential seating (e.g., near teacher or peer who can model classroom expectations)</li><li>• Limited distractions (e.g., remove unnecessary objects)</li><li>• Reduce sensory stimuli (e.g., reduce visual clutter, lighting, noise)</li></ul>	 <p><b>Social/Emotional</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Verbal narration and direction by adults during social interactions)</li><li>• Plan for additional support at early signs of loss of control</li><li>• Explicit teaching (e.g., alternatives to undesirable behavior, calming techniques)</li><li>• Designated calming area in or outside the classroom</li></ul>	 <p><b>Teaching</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Multi-sensory learning (e.g., visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and/or tactile) to support auditory information</li><li>• Strength-based instruction</li><li>• Hands-on and group projects</li><li>• Learning connected to student's life experiences</li><li>• Technology support (e.g., dictation, timers)</li></ul>
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**Remember** to be compassionate and have patience! Be flexible when children and youth with FASD are overwhelmed. While their behaviour and learning difficulties are brain-based, you can create successful experiences for the student by praising specific achievements, both large and small, and giving genuine encouragement.

<b>Resources</b>		
<a href="https://www.asantecentre.org/">https://www.asantecentre.org/</a>	<a href="https://fasdmanitoba.com/">https://fasdmanitoba.com/</a>	<a href="https://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/fasd/resources.html">https://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/fasd/resources.html</a>