

TIP SHEET FOR RELATIVES AS PARENTS

#5

8/05

FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER THROUGH CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE

FASD has lifelong implications and a broad range of characteristics

Infants: low birth weight; irritability; sensitivity to light, noises or touch; poor sucking; slow development; poor sleep-wake cycles; ear infections.

Toddlers: poor memory capability; hyperactivity; lack of fear; no sense of boundaries and a need for excessive physical contact.

Grade-school years: short attention span; poor coordination and difficulty with both fine and gross motor skills.

Older children: trouble keeping up with school; low self-esteem from recognizing they are different from their peers.

Teenagers: poor impulse control, cannot distinguish between public and private behaviors, must be reminded of concepts on a daily basis.

Tools for helping with FASD characteristics

Infants

Poor sleep-wake cycles/irritability: Play soft music and sing to your baby. Try rocking, holding, low lights, automatic swings and wrapping in a soft blanket.

Poor weight gain: Consult a nutritionist for a food plan or supplements.

Chronic ear infections: Speak to a specialist about evaluating your child's hearing and effectively treating infections.

Delays in rolling over, crawling, walking: See an occupational therapist for assistance. Also help your baby in crawling, grabbing and pulling.

Speech delays: Consult a speech therapist. Purchase tapes or toys that are designed for children with delays. Speak and read aloud expressively.

Toddlers

Continued motor skill delays: Work with an occupational or physical therapist. Use toys that focus on manipulating joints and muscles.

Distracted easily: Establish a routine and use structure. Simplify rooms in the home and reduce noises or other stimulation.

Dental problems: Consult a pediatric dentist. Our child may not be able to sit still, be sure to prepare your child and allow more time for an appointment.

Small appetites or sensitivity to food texture: Serve small portions that are lukewarm or cool and have some texture. Allow plenty of time during meals and decrease distractions such as television, radio, or multiple conversations.

School Age Children

Bedtime: If your child cannot sleep at night, shorten naps or cut them out.

Making and keeping friends: Pair your child with another who is one or two years younger. Provide activities that are short and fun.

Boundary issues: Create clear routines and plenty of repetition.

Attention problems: Medication may be helpful. Keep the child's environment as simple as possible, and structure time with brief activities.

Easily frustrated/tantrums: Remove your child from the situation and use calming techniques such as rocking time, a warm bath or quiet music.

Difficulty understanding cause and effect: Repetition, consistency and clear consequences for behavior are important.

Adolescents

Anxiety and depression: Medication may be helpful, as well as counseling and encouraging participation in sports or other structured activities.

Victimization: Monitor activities and discuss dealing with strangers.

Lying, stealing or antisocial behavior: Family counseling is helpful, as well as setting simple and consistent rules with immediate consequences.

More Tips

- Keep the family's routine as much the same each day as you can.
- If the family's routine or schedule changes, remind your child about changes.
- Learn how to tell when your child is getting frustrated, and help out early.
- Make sure your child understands the rules at home.
- Tell your child about what will happen if he or she has good behavior or bad behavior at home.
- Let your child know when he or she has good behavior.
- Teach self-talk to help your child develop self-control. Use specific short phrases such as "stop and think."
- Repeat everything you say and give your child many chances to do what you ask.
- Be patient.
- Give directions one-step at a time. Wait for your child to do the first step in the directions before telling your child the second step.
- Tell your child before you touch him or her.
- Be sure your child understands your rules. Be firm and consistent.

For more information or to discuss this topic, please call Families And Children Together (FACT) at 1-866-298-0896 and ask for a Maine Kids-Kin staff person.

This information is excerpted from the National Organization on Fetal alcohol Syndrome's website at <http://www.nofas.org/>



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