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### **No amount of alcohol is safe during pregnancy**

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There's a condition that doesn't discriminate against culture, faith, politics, status or designation, nor does it hint towards the existence of a cure. It seems there's only one thing it firmly stands by – the fact that it is 100% preventable.

Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) is a lifelong, incurable condition caused by prenatal alcohol exposure – not necessarily abuse. To raise awareness about FASD and fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS), the most severe of these disorders, 9 September was declared International FASD day around the globe.

In South Africa, the Foundation for Alcohol Related Research (FARR) has been at the forefront of research and has gained world-wide recognition for its work.

“Some people still believe, for instance, that a woman must be an alcoholic to give birth to a child with FASD,” says FARR chief executive Leana Olivier.

“The truth is, however, that no amount of alcohol is safe during pregnancy.”

“There is no known safe amount of alcohol pregnant women can drink without raising the risk of damaging their unborn babies.”

She says a large proportion of children with ADHD-like symptoms – a common behavioral disorder in all communities – could be attributed to alcohol consumption during pregnancy.

“A child with FAS can suffer from various defects like damage to the eyes, ears and heart, this may also include brain damage, which results in lifelong problems such as learning disabilities, interpersonal relationship problems, developmental disabilities such as fine motor development, coordination, arithmetic and cause and effect reasoning,” she says.

According to FARR founder Prof. Denis Viljoen, eleven studies were done in four of South Africa's provinces - recording the highest reported FAS rates in the world!

“This epidemic is 100% preventable. Rather be safe than sorry,” says Viljoen.

