

# TEN BRAIN DOMAINS (Functions) affected by FASD

Alcohol affects the growth and formation of the brain and body, and this is often seen in an individual's behaviour and development. The following brain functions or domains are evaluated by a diagnostic team during an FASD assessment.

## ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

- May have difficulty in school: reading, math, comprehension (understanding) and abstract concepts

## ATTENTION

- Can be easily distracted, difficulty paying attention and sitting still

## COGNITION

- Difficulty reasoning, planning, solving problems and understanding complex ideas
- Wide range of IQ scores are found

## LANGUAGE (Expressive and receptive)

- Delay in language development
- Difficulty understanding lengthy conversation and instructions
- May speak well, but not fully grasp the meaning
- Can repeat instructions or rules, but may not follow through

## MEMORY

- Difficulty with long-term, short-term and working memory
- May appear to lie, but is actually filling in the blanks when unable to remember
- Trouble with memorising and may seem forgetful
- Difficulty with accessing, selecting and organising information when needed

## NEUROANATOMY/NEUROPHYSIOLOGY (Brain structure and function)

- Could have a smaller head, brain size, seizure disorder and/or abnormal findings on a scan (ex: MRI or EEG) consistent with prenatal alcohol exposure

## EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING

- May have trouble with planning, sequencing, problem solving and organising
- May be impulsive and/or hyperactive
- Difficulty understanding cause and effect and controlling behaviour
- Challenges with transitions and change
- Often repeats mistakes
- Difficulty with concepts, abstracts ideas, consequences and managing time

## ADAPTIVE BEHAVIOR, SOCIAL SKILLS AND SOCIAL COMMUNICATION

- May not understand personal boundaries and have difficulty reading social cues
- May be socially vulnerable and easily taken advantage of
- Difficulty seeing things from another's perspective
- Socially and emotionally immature and may behave younger than actual age
- May have trouble with hygiene, money and coping skills

## MOTOR SKILLS

- Difficulty with balance, strength, endurance, coordination, reflexes and muscle tone
- Difficulty with printing, using pencil and scissors

## AFFECT REGULATION

- Includes anxiety, depression and mood imbalance in the severe range meets Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-V criteria

Ref: Manitoba, FASD Network, Professional FASD Assessment and Support



**FASD-CAN**

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder  
Care Action Network

For more FASD support within Aotearoa go to [fasd-can.org.nz](http://fasd-can.org.nz)