

## FASD? Mental Health? Both?



There is much confusion about FASD and mental health.

Here are some common questions we are asked:

### Is FASD a mental health disorder?

No. FASD is a brain injury caused by prenatal alcohol exposure. FASD is now considered a full body disorder. People with FASD may have additional health issues along with brain differences.

### Are people with FASD “mental”?

No. People with FASD are people who are born with a disability that changes how their brain and body work.

### Do people with FASD always have a mental illness?

No. Any people with FASD may experience anxiety and depression but the reasons for this are mixed. Sometimes their living situation is causing anxiety, sometimes it is linked to chemical differences in the brain. Some people with FASD may be diagnosed with attention disorders like ADHD.

### FASD is in the DSM-5, but the language is different does this mean it's a psychiatric disorder?

No. The DSM-5 identifies prenatal exposure to alcohol as a disorder but it's not a psychiatric disorder. Due to chemical differences in the brain caused by prenatal alcohol use, and sometimes genetics, some psychiatric conditions can co-occur with FASD (i.e. schizophrenia). Any treatment for a psychiatric disorder needs to consider the impact of FASD before prescribing medications.

