

# Raja and Neil's FASD Book Club

## Is My Baby Affected?



Dr Neil Aiton is a neonatologist. He helps new-born babies who were exposed to alcohol in the womb.



In this session, he talked about how he and other experts try to diagnose FASD in new-born babies.



He talked about what they look for to help them.



And he talked about new ways of diagnosing FASD in babies, and ways that doctors and scientists are still researching.

# How alcohol affects different fetuses in different ways



Some people are more resistant to the effects of alcohol than others. There seems to be 4 main reasons for this:



1) Some people are more resistant because of their family history, and the genes that they inherit from their parents (genetics).



2) Some people's bodies can remove alcohol from their systems faster than others (metabolism).



3) The way that different people eat can affect how well they can process alcohol (diet).



4) How much alcohol people have drunk in the past can affect how used to processing alcohol their body is (alcohol history).

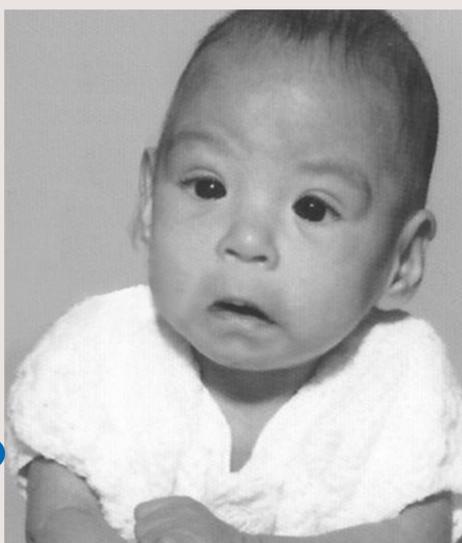
# Identifying babies at birth



Doctors look at whether or not babies were exposed to alcohol in the womb, including how much and how often they were exposed.



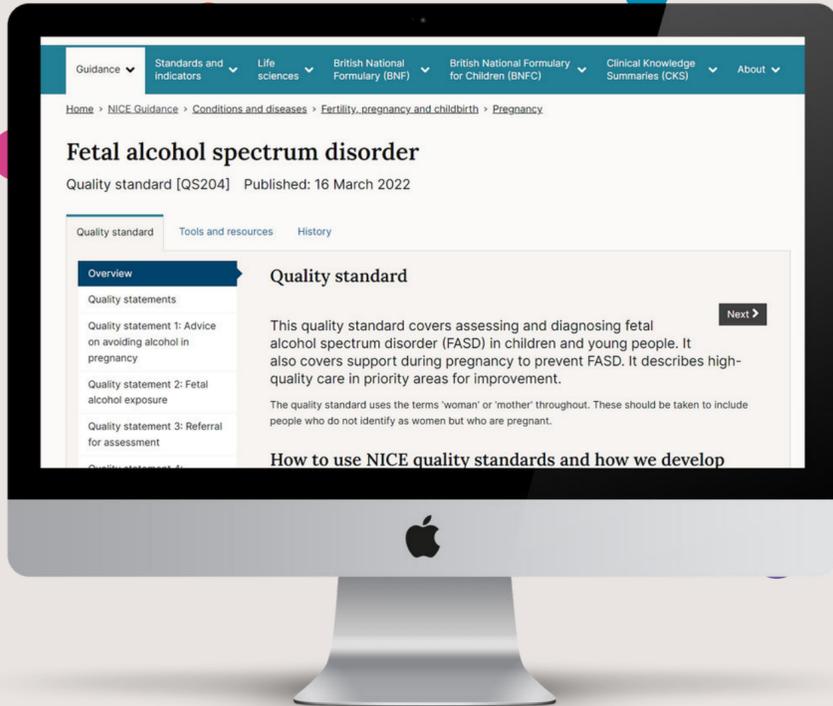
Not every baby exposed to alcohol in the womb will have FASD.



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A small group of babies with FASD might have 3 key facial features (called 'sentinel facial features') that show the baby was exposed early in the pregnancy. But most babies with FASD will not have these facial features.

# The NICE Quality Standard on FASD



In 2021, NICE released their Quality Standard on FASD. This is a set of 5 statements that healthcare professionals as well as teachers and social workers need to work towards.

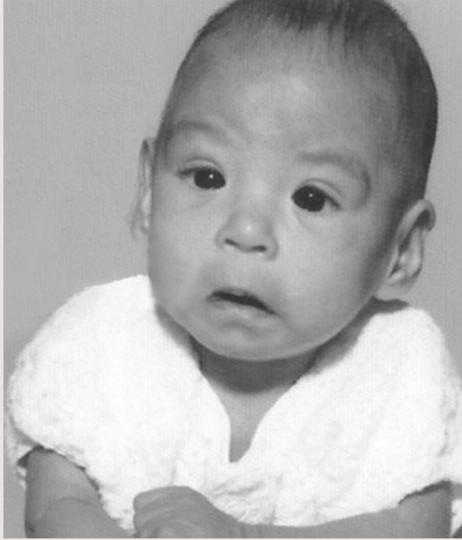
One of the statements in the Nice Quality Standard on FASD says that pregnant women should be asked about their alcohol use throughout pregnancy and it should be recorded.

Recording if a pregnancy was alcohol-exposed is important because it will help doctors identify children who might be at risk for FASD.

If they are identified earlier in life, people with FASD can get access to the support they need sooner, which can help give them better outcomes in life.

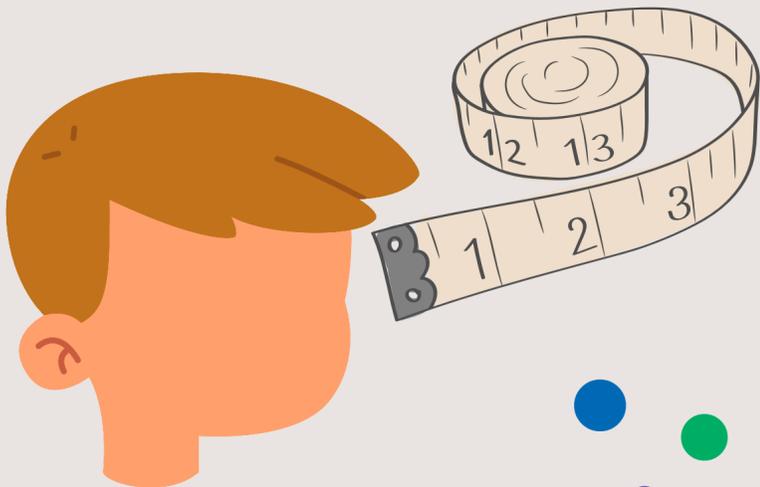


# What doctors look for when they diagnose babies with FASD

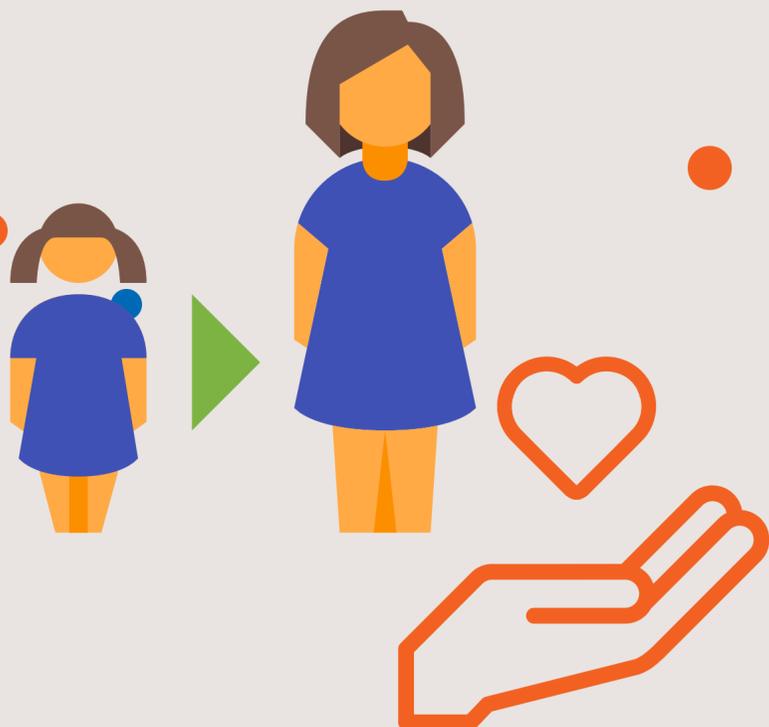


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Some signs of FASD are quite obvious, and can help doctors a lot, like certain facial features which a few with FASD have (sentinel facial features), or differences in growth, or confirmed exposure to alcohol in the womb.



Doctors can also measure the size of a baby's head, but this often isn't very accurate.



It's important for doctors to try and recognise the signs of FASD as soon as possible to help people get the support they need and deserve. It can help them be more successful and happier throughout their lives.

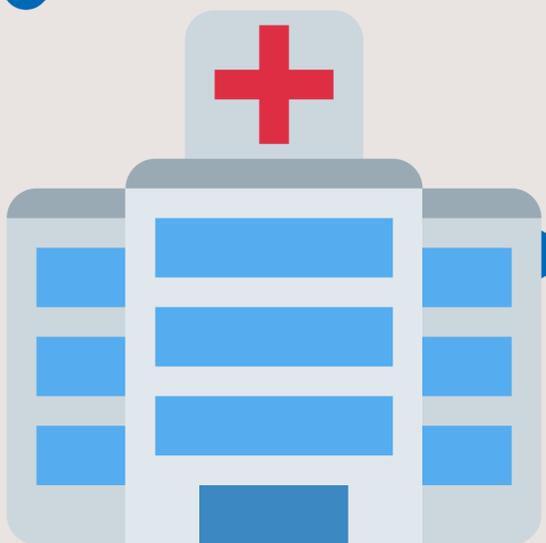
# Challenges in diagnosing babies with FASD



Because FASD is mainly a brain-based condition, it can take a few years for it to show in children.



This means that it's important for doctors to identify babies who are likely to have FASD so they can be re-assessed later.



One of the main problems, though, is that most healthcare services are not yet set up to track the health and development of babies who do not have an identified condition.



Because FASD is usually an invisible disability, it can often be overlooked.

# Developing new techniques for diagnosing FASD in babies



Because diagnosing FASD in babies can be quite hard, doctors and scientists are looking for new methods that might help them.

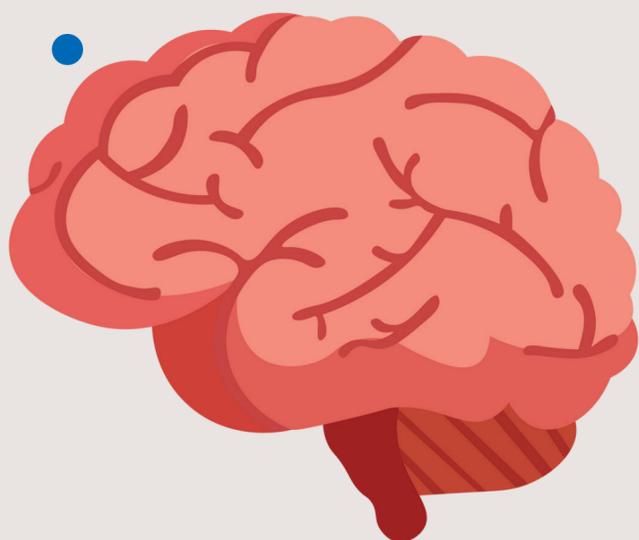
## 3D



One of them involves taking a 3D photo of the baby's face and comparing it with lots of others to look for possible differences that might show FASD.

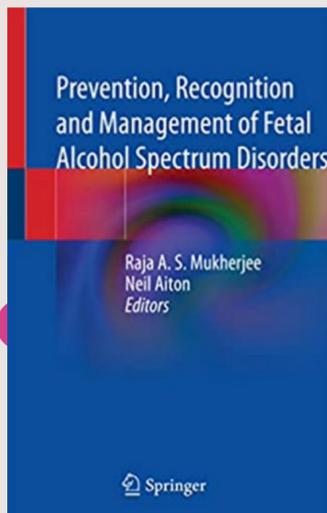


These 3D images can show how the middle part of the baby's face has been affected by alcohol as it developed in the womb.



Neil is interested in looking for how FASD might show up in a baby's brain, and is studying brain scans to look for possible signs.

# What is Raja & Neil's FASD Bookclub?



Prof Raja Mukherjee and Dr Neil Aiton wrote a book for other doctors about FASD. But they hope more people can access the information.



In this online book club people who wrote chapters give 15- minute talks about what they wrote and then they answer questions.



After each book club, the talks are shared on National FASD's YouTube channel.



You don't have to read the book. It's expensive because it's for libraries and universities. But if you want to order it, it's here:

<https://tinyurl.com/RajaAndNeilFASDBook>