



FASD
Frontline Newsletter



October, 2010 Fall Issue

Autumn and Winter Challenges for Children with Special Needs

Autumn and winter can be difficult seasons for children who have special needs, especially tactile or other sensory defectiveness. All children deal with the stress of changing school programs, teachers and schedules, getting back into the routine of transportation, school lunch and playground rules. Children with special needs have extra challenges as support staff, therapists and administrators work out schedule and staffing issues the first weeks or months of the new school year. It may take some time to work out where in a classroom a child's special needs can be accommodated best, as teachers discover whois noisy or disruptive and which students

distract or support those who have more difficulty maintaining their focus. Sometimes problems with behavior or concentration may be caused by something as simple as new shoes or outfits that may be uncomfortable. Many moms have found that buying gently used clothing at thrift stores works even better than laundering the 'newness' out of back to school clothing. Changes in the weather can make any child fret with the wind blowing leaves and everything else into their faces, chapping cheeks and hands. Those who have difficulty with sensory overload may find the sound and feeling of stormy or brisk weather unbearable. New jackets and coats can be uncomfortable and bulky, although many children feel more comfortable in one size bigger than their parents buy in preparation for the winter

growth spurts. Having children with chronic health problems adequately dressed for playground and P.E. time can be as simple as reminding everyone in the class to pull on their jackets and warm gear.
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This newsletter contains information regarding resources, services, articles, research and any other materials that might inform and provide support to frontline workers and caregivers. If you wish to share information or to be added to our e-list subscription, please contact:

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Holiday events and seasonal traditions add stress to children's lives, especially where a certain level of behavior is expected, often unrealistically. Costumes for parties, holiday plays and performances, party clothes for events, and behavioral expectations during visits to friends and relatives can be unbearable for some children.

It takes a great deal of planning and preparation to allow for children's special needs, including escape plans and safe

places for them to calm themselves and be relieved of sensory overload.

Remember that conflicts may arise because people in general are having emotional difficulties and stress due to the events and traditions of the Fall and Winter holiday season. Planning for places and times of retreat and true relaxation can benefit everyone in the family.

The best rule is to plan to have some good times, rather than perfect times, and have some quiet time scheduled into the most

difficult places. Everyone needs time to express themselves, to be heard and appreciated; and room to be alone and calm down when they are overstimulated. Happy memories are not always the perfectly staged ones, but those that come as if by accident when we plan for the imperfect things to occur.

Pamela Wilson

www.bellaonline.com

Article of Interest

Ask Pregnant Women If They'd Like a Drink

Canadian Medicine

Owen Dyer



Canada may be a little short of babies, but its got plenty of alcohol. Keeping the two separate has mostly been the task of GPs. But the Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada says they are falling short. Many pregnant women who drink are missed, says the SOGC, often because physicians are unwilling to ask questions about alcohol.

Doctors who don't make alcohol use a routine question on all visits may be particularly unwilling to suddenly raise the issue during pregnancy, given the stigma associated with mothers who drink. And even those who do raise it may not be getting honest answers.

"Many physicians don't even ask the question," says Gideon Koren, director of the Motherisk Program at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children. "Its not an easy thing to ask. We have a sad reality that physicians and other health professionals are not doing their job on that, namely a lot of women are not asked and we do not identify the cases. At the end are kids who are heavily affected."

Dr Koren sat on an SOGC panel that has just issued new guidelines on alcohol screening in pregnancy. The guidelines offer an interesting snapshot of female drinking in Canada. Did you know that richer, more educated women, while less prone to binge drinking, are more likely to consume alcohol on a daily basis? Or that Quebec has the highest number of frequent women drinkers, by a wide margin? And where can you find the highest proportion of female teetotalers? You'd never guess - Its Nunavut.

The SOGC takes a nuanced position on abstinence, recognizing that theres just not enough evidence on the effects of low-level consumption. Essentially, the guidelines suggest you recommend abstinence in cases where you think you can make it stick, but avoid an all-or-nothing approach if you think it will scare the patient away.

Not scaring the patient away is the key thing in alcohol screening. While a record of maternal alcohol use has proven health benefits for the infant with FASD, its benefit to the mother is far less clear - it can lead to them losing custody of their kids and they know it.

Don't ask patients how often they "use alcohol" , but instead inquire how frequently they "enjoy a drink" . Don't tell them that by drinking they may have harmed their baby, but instead emphasize how cutting alcohol could help the baby's health.

Don't lowball. When prompting the patient on how many drinks she consumes a week, suggest a high number, because if you suggest a low one, the patient will be reluctant to incur your disapproval by admitting she drinks more than that.

While a warm, informal approach is generally best, validated alcohol dependence questionnaires like CRAFT and TWEAK are useful. They avoid stigma because the patient tends to assume they're routinely given in all pregnancies. (Or you could try our non-validated WYLAB questionnaire, which identifies at-risk patients with just one question: "Would you like a beer?")

However you screen, the effort will pay dividends, says Dr. Koren, who notes that 40% of pregnancies with high alcohol consumption result in a fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. About 3% of Canadian children are born with such a condition, which effects ranging from reduced IQ to violent aggression. In fact, says Koren, about half the inmates of Canada's prisons are the offspring of hard-drinking mothers.

Owen Dyer

'You have great strength, now you need some support'

Letter

Winnipeg Free Press

08.14.10

DEAR MISS LONELYHEARTS:

I was unfortunately born with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) and grew up in a living hell. I had the hardest time socializing, making friends, going to school, and keeping relationships with my family and boyfriends. I'm almost 22 now. I successfully graduated high school and college with no teacher aid and I feel better than ever.... I still have my struggles, though. I went to therapy to understand why I directed my anger at my adopted (but I call them my real) parents. Last year, my dad accidentally told me that she (my bio-mother) drank the entire pregnancy, smoked and did cocaine while I was in the womb. We had been close, but then I realized my troubles were caused by her and I have to deal with this disability forever. She denies what she did, has told her husband not to take my calls, and makes it seem like I'm the bad person. I still have mental breakdowns of how my life could have been different if I weren't born addicted to alcohol. Writing my feelings and therapy don't help. I want to know if anyone else who knows they suffer from this horrible and preventable disability feels the same. Can you help? -- Nothing helps.

Dear Nothing Helps: I have great admiration for what you have achieved -- graduating school and college on your own strength, determination --- and don't underestimate this, YOUR intelligence. What you need is a group of people who have achieved and thrived and can help each other further. Sometimes support groups can actually bring each other down by "aweful-izing" . There seems to be a gap in services for FASD survivors and thrivers. Life's journey provides services for your age group but you may have to start your own support group to find your kind of FASD people. All you need is two or three people to get started, plus topics and ideas for speakers, research and activities. Should you start a group and wish to get the word out for members, contact the newsletter at Manitoba Coalition on Alcohol and Pregnancy. Starting a blog would also help, and you'll find your respondents are world-wide.

Nutritional Recommendations

Here are some nutrition tips to follow for individuals with FASD:

Diet Recommendations:

- No Aspartame
 - No artificial food colors (the ones with numbers)
 - No MSG
- Research shows that these are highly toxic to the brain and may impact the behavior of children with neurodevelopmental disorders.

Things to AVOID:

- Hot Dogs
- Pepperoni
- Jell-O
- Kool-Aid
- Most colored candy
- Most sports drinks (powerade, gatorade)

Coloring to Avoid (Check on ingredients lists)
Red 2, Red 3, Red 40, Blue 1, Blue 2, Green 3, Orange B, Yellow 5, Yellow 6

Extra Nutrients:

Doctors and Nutritionists recommend:

- Daily vitamin (no artificial colors)
- Vitamin E Omega 3 fish oil
- Lecithin (gel cap or powder). This has choline which helps improve neural connectivity and brain function.

Happy Foods

Chocolate Milk, Turkey, Chicken, Potatoes, Leafy green vegetables, Bananas

These foods all boost the neurotransmitters serotonin and dopamine.

3 Basic Rules:

1. Read the labels
2. Cook from scratch when possible
3. Watch for prescribed and over-the-counter medications that have additives

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*Not to be construed as medical advice. Consult with your doctor.

Plan for Safe Trick or Treating

Tips to keep kids with learning disabilities safe on the trick or treat route - Plan ahead for safety

By: Ann Logsdon, About.com Guided

You can never be too safe for Halloween. This is especially true for children with learning disabilities. Trick or treating, as they say, "Isn't what it used to be". Many parents opt not to allow their children to go at all because of the safety issues. If you do plan to allow your child to participate, planning ahead for safety will help. These tips will help get you started.

Safe Trick or Treating

- Plan your route based on your child's age, emotional maturity, and behavior.

1. Consider attending trick or treating events hosted by local parks and recreational organizations, shopping malls and civic organizations instead of going house-to-house. Some children, such as those with ADHD, may be more manageable with the structure of an organized event than with traditional trick or treating.
2. If you must go house-to-house, consider going only in your own neighborhood where you know the residents. Choose a landmark as a stopping point. Tell your child that when you reach the spot, it will be time to go home.
3. Do not allow your child to eat treats before you have carefully examined them. If you expect an argument, carry the treat bag yourself. Bring some snacks from home, and share them along the way.
4. Check with the area hospitals and law enforcement to see if they plan to offer candy x-rays for safety. If they do, take them up on the offer.
5. Check each package of candy carefully in strong lighting. Look for broken seals, holes in wrappers, and wrappers showing signs of tampering. Throw away suspect items.
6. Always walk with your child. In some cases, older, responsible teens can accompany younger children, but this decision should be made carefully. Does the older child know what to do in cases of emergency? Does he/she actually want to go with the child? Will the younger child follow the teenager's instructions? Most importantly, has this child demonstrated responsible decision making and actions in the past? These are just a few of the questions you should consider before allowing your younger child to go with a teenager.
7. If your child has more challenging learning disabilities or behavioral disorders and special needs, it is often best that you go with him. You may be the only person who can reasonably anticipate and address problems that may arise.
8. Keep children on paved walkways if available, and do not allow them to dart across darkened lawns. Remind kids to walk and not run. In neighborhoods with no sidewalks, have children walk beside, and not on, the road.
9. Excitement runs high in trick or treating, so remind children to cross streets at corners after looking both ways or waiting for the appropriate traffic signal. Do not allow children to cross at the middle of the street. Children should only trick or treat at homes with lights on and should never enter someone's house or apartment unless you know them and you can accompany them.
10. Watch out for jack o'lanterns, which may have candles with open flames in them. Keep children's costumes away from them.

Halloween on a Budget

Halloween can get expensive! Costumes, candy for the neighbors, decorations for the house, snacks for classroom parties at school, yikes! Here are some easy tips to make Halloween a little less scary for your wallet:

- Set a budget and stick to it! Make sure your children know exactly how much you have decided to spend on costumes.
- Don't buy early! Most stores will start discounting Halloween supplies a week or so before Halloween.
- Talk to your friends and family and see if you can do a costume swap. Children outgrow costumes after they've worn them only once.
- Check out different websites for inexpensive do-it-yourself costume ideas (children's costumes can be very expensive when store bought). Try www.familyfun.com for many inexpensive costumes you can make at home.
- If you MUST host the Halloween party for your friends and/or family, do a potluck style. It's a great way to get a good variety of foods without breaking anyone's bank.
- Make your own Halloween decorations. Store bought decor can get very pricey! Making your decorations at home not only saves money, but it will give your little ghosts and goblins an opportunity to help make your house spooky! Visit www.kidsturncentral.com for ideas.

Parent Retreat 2010: Songs of Strength

Friday November 5th, 1:00 p.m. to Saturday November 6th, 3:30 p.m.

Location: Saskatoon Inn, 2002 Airport Drive, Saskatoon, SK

Registration Deadline is Tuesday October 12, 2010



Photo used with permission of Jennevie Schlemmer

We hope that you will find a way to join us at this retreat planned just for you. While we realize that finding childcare can be difficult, **this event is for adults only.**

There is no cost to participate. Overnight accommodations are provided to out of town guests. Meals and registration are also complimentary.

Please register early as space is limited. Priority will be given to residents of Saskatchewan.

Please send your completed registration form **by mail or email** to:

Lynette Janzen
Project Coordinator
FASD Support Network of Saskatchewan
212 - 510 Cynthia Street
Saskatoon, SK S7L 7K7
Email: fasdoffice@sasktel.net
Phone: 306-975-0896
Toll Free: 1-866-673-3276

Every family living with FASD has a story shaped by strengths and abilities. This story can be thought of as a song with a unique rhythm, melody and lyrics.

Songs of Strength, learned when things are going well, are reminders to draw on these strengths when things are hard.

This retreat is an opportunity to listen and learn from one another as well as to enjoy a time of encouragement and relaxation.

As a parent-led organization we know that it is important for parents to come together with others who understand and care.

Throughout the two-day retreat, you will attend informative sessions with knowledgeable speakers, have opportunities to network with other parents and receive helpful print materials. You will hear information about FASD as well as some of the services and supports that are available to families living with FASD in Saskatchewan. You will meet with other parents and have the opportunity to share your stories of challenge and success, to listen and to learn, to enjoy time away and to develop friendships and supports.

Guest speaker **Marsha Wilson** is an expert on FASD, advocacy, employment and parent support. She will provide information and lead activities designed to help you discover and build on the strengths of your family.

There will also be time to go out for the evening, or enjoy a number of opportunities for self care in the spa-like atmosphere of the Saskatoon Inn.



The Alert Program, "How Does Your Engine Run?"

"How Does Your Engine Run" - The Alert Program for Self-Regulation is being offered as a fun, physically active, education series.

Come and have fun with your child while assisting him/her to learn the following skills:

- Recognize one's own state of alertness
- Learn to take action to adjust this when necessary
- Begin to use the vocabulary of self-regulation to communicate more effectively with others.

For more information or registration forms, please contact:

Fay Wilson

Ph: 780.640.9401 ext 228 Fax: 780.640.9404

Email: wilson@robinhoodassoc.com

Program Cost: \$60 (Program delivery, snacks, supplies and workbooks)

*subsidy available to cost share program fee and bus tickets

The fall 2010 series of this program is for children 6-10 years of age accompanied by a parent who is willing to participate in the program.

Schedule: 6 Wednesdays, 6pm-7pm

October 6,13,20,27

November 3, 20