

# Infant Mental Health



# What Is Infant Mental Health?

Infant mental health refers to the social, emotional and intellectual well-being of children 0-3 years in terms of their relationship with their carers.



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# **Why Is Your Baby's Mental Health & Emotional Well-being So Important?**



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*“The period between pregnancy and 3 years is increasingly seen as a critical period in shaping children’s life chances, based on evidence of brain formation, communication and language development and the impact of relationships formed during this period on mental health.”*

*“It is also a crucial time to intervene.”*

Early Years Framework 2008



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*“What happens in the early years can affect the course of development across the lifespan.”*

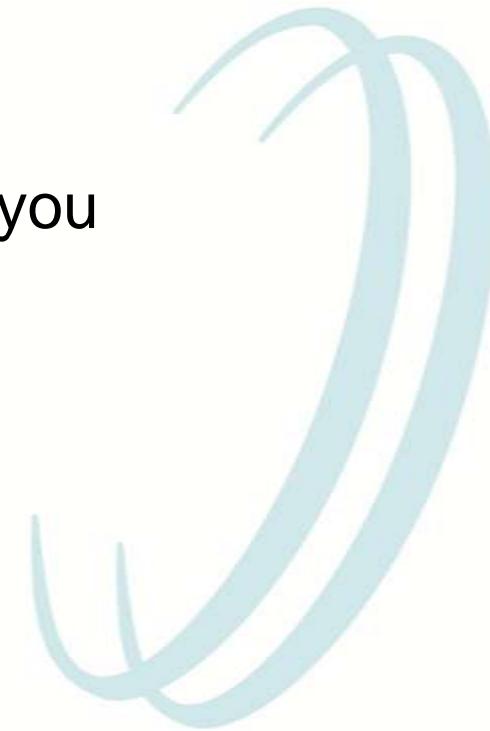
Deborah Weatherston  
World Association of Infant Mental Health



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# Promoting Your Baby's Mental Health Can Nurture:

- Brain development
- Language development
- Your baby forming a secure attachment to you



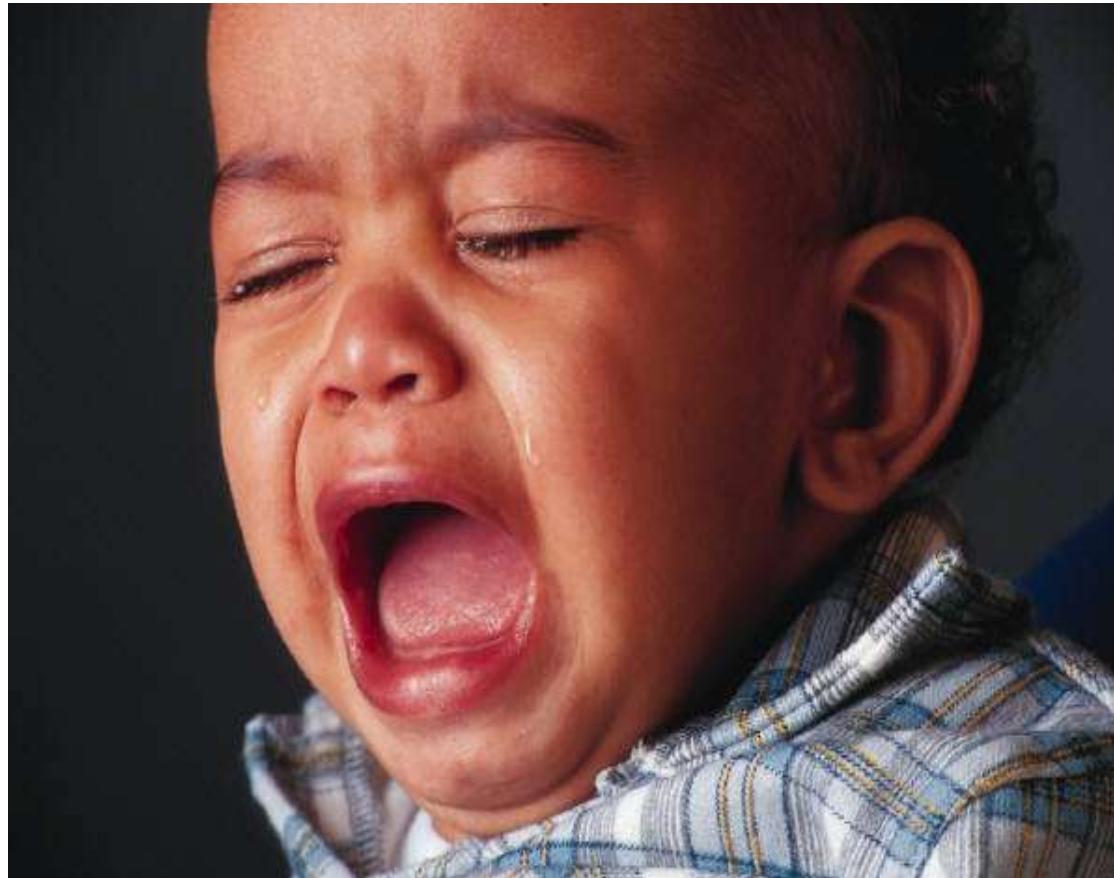
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# **And Can Prevent....**



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# Attachment Disorder



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# Violence



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# Mental Health Issues Throughout Life



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# Drinking Alcohol In Pregnancy Can Cause:

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome

and

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder



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Which are lifelong defects;

of which

there is no known cure.



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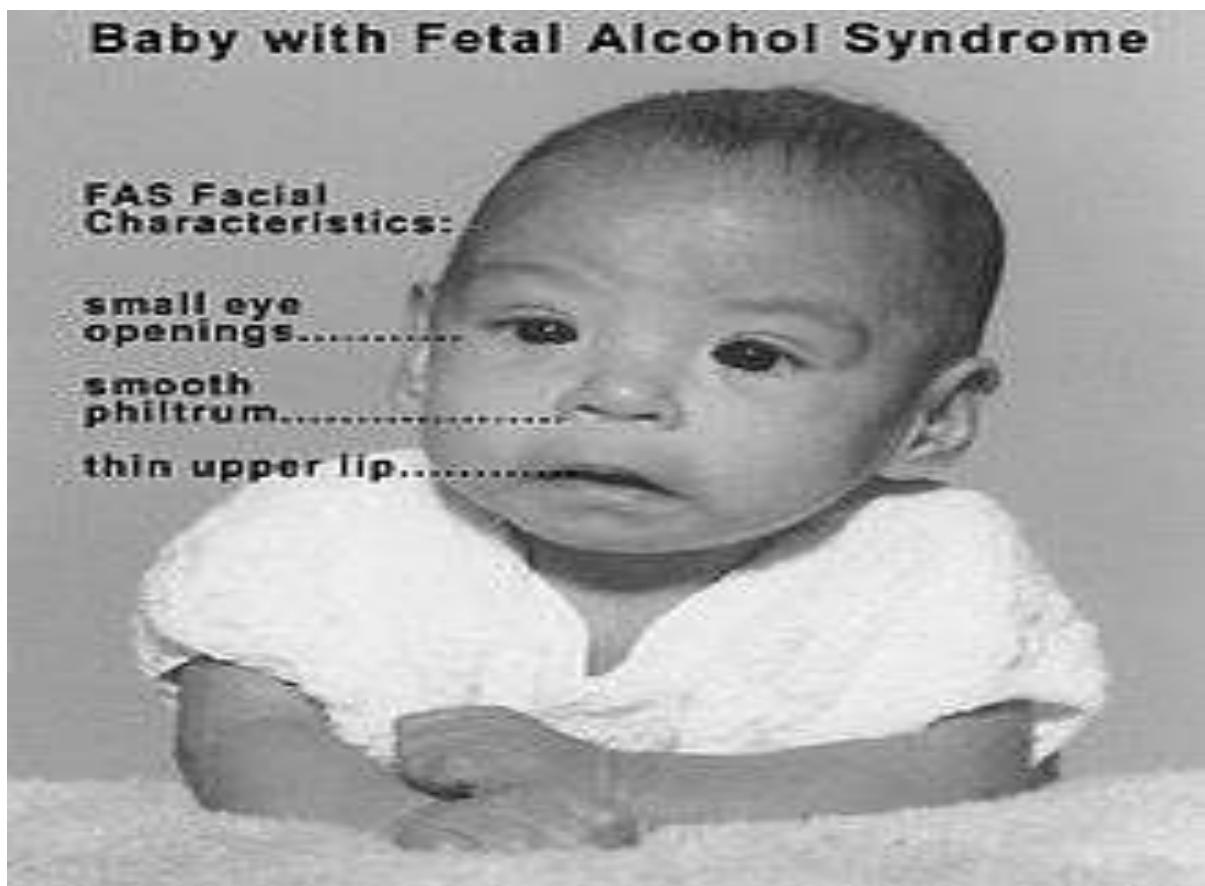
## **Baby with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome**

### **FAS Facial Characteristics:**

**small eye  
openings.....**

**smooth  
philtrum.....**

**thin upper lip.....**



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**Fetal Alcohol Syndrome  
&  
Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder  
Are**

**100% Preventable;  
By avoiding alcohol in pregnancy.**



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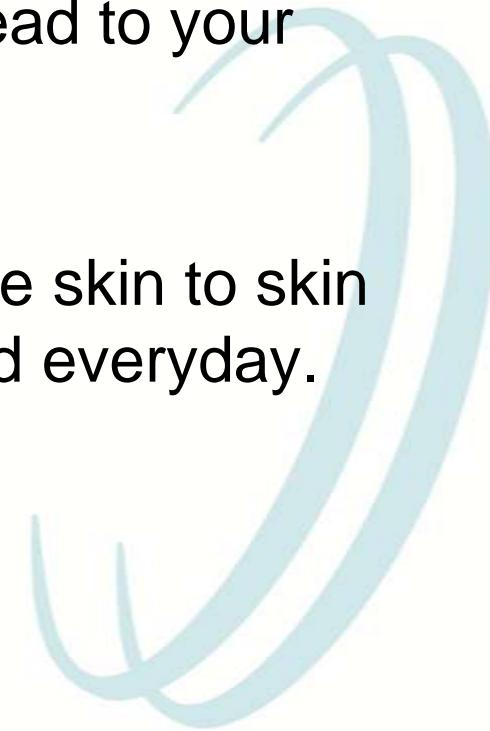


# How You Can Promote Your Baby/Young Child's Mental Health

- Avoid alcohol and drug substances in pregnancy.
- Look at, smile at, talk calmly to, sing and read to your baby/ child everyday.
- Hold, cuddle, gently rock, stroke, encourage skin to skin contact, soothe and comfort your baby/child everyday.



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There is no clinical research  
available to say you can  
spoil your baby/young child.



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There is a huge volume of research

to highlight

the importance of

bonding with your child

in the early years.



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However;  
for whatever reason,  
sometimes love can take time to grow.



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# There Is Support

- Available to help you with your developing relationship with your baby/child.
- Talk to your professional for advice, support and onward referral to i-CAMHS if required.



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# **Intervention Offered at i-CAMHS:**

- 1:1 support in a locality venue and time that is suitable for you
- Systemic practice
- Video work as a therapeutic tool (with your consent)
- Cognitive methods
- Child development
- Parenting advice and support



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# Promoting the Parent Child Relationship

*“Helping parents understand and respond to their infant’s unique way of communicating is probably the most important intervention to the infant’s development of a secure attachment.”*

*P. Svanberg 2002*



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