

Fostering Understanding

FASDs & Occupational Therapy

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FASDs FAQs

- Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs) is an **umbrella term** for when a **child is exposed to alcohol before birth**
- Up to **1 in 20 U.S. school aged children have FASDs** (United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024)
- **Permanent brain damage** leading to challenges with attention, safety recognition, and sensory processing



Behavioral/Sensory Impact

- **Behavioral** (Dubovsky, 2019):
 - Said to have no remorse due to **smiling and laughing all the time**
 - May **take longer to respond**; difficulty working through things
 - May **think literally**
 - May be anxious, stressed, angry, aggressive, and have a **limited understanding of fear**
- **Sensory** (Dubovsky, 2019):
 - Tend to be **hypersensitive** for all senses: vision, hearing, touch, taste, smell, proprioception (body in space), interoception (senses inside body), and vestibular (movement/balance of head in space)



What is Occupational Therapy (OT)?

- OT helps all age groups be able to **do the things they want/need to do** (occupations) as **independently as possible**. This can include:
 - Social participation, play/leisure, emotional regulation, feeding, dressing, education, fine motor and gross motor skills, routines, executive functioning, and so much more



OT Behavioral/Sensory Strategies



- **Behavioral** (Collins-Feist, 2021):
 - Give only **2 coping strategies** to repeatedly practice every time they are stressed or anxious (**practice them when calm or playing**)
 - Taking deep breaths (breathing bubbles, breathing in a mirror, blowing dandelions)
 - Counting to 10 (with fingers)
 - Yoga poses with breathing
 - 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 Method
- **Sensory** (Collins-Feist, 2021; Dubovsky, 2019):
 - Lowering the lights
 - Sucking on hard candy or chewing gum
 - Warm bath
 - Talking in soft voice, lower volume, and tone
 - Deep pressure/hugs/weighted vest and blankets
 - Essential oils (lavender, eucalyptus, orange)
- ***Safety***:
 - Alarms on doors and windows (locks)
 - Lock up medicine, vitamins, knives, and cleaning supplies

Resources

- **Scan the QR codes** to lead you to copies of the **Home Sensory Checklist** and the **Self-Care Journal for Caregivers**.
- **Referring to OT:**
 - Need a **referral from pediatrician** for insurance purposes
 - Child has difficulties with:
 - **Life skills** (dressing, brushing teeth, toileting)
 - **Executive functioning** (organization, planning, attention)
 - **Social participation/play** (sharing, taking turns)
 - **Fine/gross motor skills** (cutting, balance, writing)
 - **Emotional regulation** (calming down, emotions)



References

Collins-Feist, B. (2021). *A sensory approach to home* [Continuing education course]. Continued. <https://www.occupationaltherapy.com/ot-ceus/course/a-sensory-approach-to-home-5064>

Dubovsky, D. (2019). *Modifying approaches to improve outcomes for children with a fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and their families* [Continuing education course]. Continued. <https://www.occupationaltherapy.com/ot-ceus/course/modifying-approaches-to-improve-outcomes-4145>

United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024). *About fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs)*. https://www.cdc.gov/fasd/about/index.html#cdc_disease_basics_testing_screening-diagnosis

