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LEADING HEALTH EXPERTS EMPHASIZE 5 EFFECTIVE WAYS TO PREVENT BIRTH DEFECTS

'Best for You. Best for Baby.' Focus of National Birth Defects Prevention Month 2021

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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[**City, State**] – “Every 4 ½ minutes a baby is born with a birth defect in the United States. Simply put – it doesn’t have to be that common,” said [**Organization representative**]. That’s why [**Organization**] is joining with leading prenatal health experts from the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, American Academy of Pediatrics, the March of Dimes, Society for Birth Defects Research and Prevention and MotherToBaby this month to increase awareness of 5 critical tips to reduce the chances of having a baby with a birth defect.

The National Birth Defects Prevention Month campaign theme, “**Best for You. Best for Baby.**” aims to raise awareness of the roughly [**prevalence information for your state**] birth defects cases occurring in [**State**] each year. “While we can’t prevent all birth defects, the following steps increase a woman’s chance of having a healthy baby,” explained [**Organization representative**].

- 1. Be sure to take 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid every day.**
 - Folic acid is very important because it can help prevent some major birth defects of the baby’s brain and spine when taken before and during early pregnancy.
- 2. Book a visit with your healthcare provider before stopping or starting any medicine.**
 - There are often benefits to continuing treatment throughout pregnancy. Discussing a treatment plan before a pregnancy allows a woman and her health care provider to weigh the pros and cons of all options to keep mom and baby as healthy as possible.
- 3. Become up-to-date with all vaccines, including the flu shot.**
 - Having the right vaccinations, like the flu and Tdap vaccines, at the right time during pregnancy can help keep a woman and her baby healthy.
- 4. Before you get pregnant, try to reach a healthy weight.**
 - Obesity increases the risk for several serious birth defects and other pregnancy complications.
- 5. Boost your health by avoiding harmful substances during pregnancy, such as alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.**
 - There is no known safe amount of alcohol during pregnancy and its exposure can cause major birth defects.
 - Smoking during pregnancy can cause dangerous chemicals to damage the placenta and/or reach baby’s bloodstream.
 - The opioid addiction epidemic has led to a sharp increase in Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS), premature birth and drug withdrawal in developing babies.

"Birth defects are a common cause of death in the first year of a baby's life, but change happens through awareness," added Jason L. Salemi, PhD, MPH, NBDPN President. "We're thrilled [Organization] is doing its part to positively change the outcome for babies across [State]."

How You Can Help

[Organization] encourages health advocates as well as the general public to be an active participant in National Birth Defects Prevention Month. Follow and share #Best4YouBest4Baby messages on social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. In addition, the complete 2021 NBDPN Birth Defects Prevention Month information packet, including this year's primary tips for birth defects prevention, "*Best for You. Best for Baby. 5 Tips for Preventing Birth Defects*," is available online at: <https://www.nbdpn.org/bdpm.php>. All materials can be printed, electronically conveyed, or added to websites for distribution as needed.

Additional Resources to Support Healthy Pregnancies

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The CDC's National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities (NCBDDD) strives to advance the health and well-being of our nation's most vulnerable populations.

www.cdc.gov/birthdefects

American Academy of Pediatrics

Dedicated to the health of all children, providing age-specific health information.

www.healthychildren.org

MotherToBaby, a free service of the non-profit Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS)

Communicate directly with experts about exposures, like medications, vaccines and more, during pregnancy and breastfeeding by calling toll-free (866) 626-6847, texting questions to (855) 999-3525, live chatting or emailing at

www.MotherToBaby.org

Society for Birth Defects Research and Prevention

An international and multidisciplinary group of scientists including researchers, clinicians, epidemiologists, and public health professionals from academia, government and industry who study birth defects, reproduction, and disorders of developmental origin.

<https://birthdefectsresearch.org/>

March of Dimes

An organization aiming to make sure babies get the strongest start possible as well as reducing the rate of prematurity.

www.marchofdimes.org