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“Every Journey Matters” Campaign Launches Amid Rising Infant Health Concerns During National Birth Defects Awareness Month

[City, State] – As national headlines spotlight the largest increase in U.S. infant mortality in more than two decades and ongoing concerns surrounding maternal and infant health disparities, **YOUR ORGANIZATION NAME** and the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN) are launching National Birth Defects Awareness Month to highlight prevention, support, and the unique journeys of individuals living with birth defects.

Each year, 1 in 33 U.S. babies is born with a birth defect. These include congenital heart defects, cleft lip and/or palate, and spina bifida. Many birth defects occur in the first trimester, often before a person knows they are pregnant. Some birth defects can lead to lifelong health challenges for the affected individual.

A recent CDC provisional report showed a 3 percent rise in infant mortality — the largest increase in more than 20 years — according to the National Center for Health Statistics’ [Vital Statistics Rapid Release: Infant Mortality, Provisional 2022](#). Birth defects remain the leading cause of infant death in the United States. Yet the impact of birth defects is not felt equally across segments of the population. For example, infants born to Black mothers experience a 30 percent higher risk of mortality from birth defects compared to infants born to White mothers.

“Rising infant mortality is a warning sign we cannot ignore,” said [NAME, TITLE, ORGANIZATION]. “Behind every statistic is a family, a child, and a story. National Birth Defects Awareness Month is a reminder that prevention, early care, and equitable access to health services can change the trajectory of a child’s entire life. Every journey matters — and every community has a role in supporting healthy beginnings.”

At the same time, medical advances mean that more children with birth defects are living longer, healthier lives and reaching adulthood. Each person’s needs and experiences are unique, highlighting the importance of individualized care, strong support systems, and equitable access to healthcare and community resources across the lifespan.

Although not all birth defects can be prevented, certain steps can reduce the risk and support healthier pregnancies, including:

- Taking 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid every day for at least one month before pregnancy
- Avoiding infections that can cause birth defects or otherwise be harmful to the pregnancy or the developing baby
- Seeing a healthcare professional when planning a pregnancy and starting prenatal care as soon as possible
- Talking to a healthcare provider about medications and recommended vaccinations in pregnancy
- Getting chronic health conditions, like diabetes and thyroid conditions, under control before getting pregnant.
- Aim for a healthy body weight to avoid risks associated with obesity in pregnancy
- Avoiding alcohol, cigarettes, vaping, cannabis, and other illicit drugs throughout pregnancy

For more information on reducing the risk of birth defects click [here](#).

Individuals, families, educators, and healthcare providers can access tools, fact sheets, and awareness materials to support these action steps at: <https://nbdpn.org/national-birth-defects-awareness-month/>.

More about NBDPN

The NBDPN is a volunteer-based organization that addresses the issues of birth defects surveillance, research, and prevention under one umbrella by maintaining a national network of state and population-based birth defects programs. Learn more at nbdpn.org.

National Birth Defects Awareness Month materials and activities are an output of [the National Birth Defects Prevention Network \(NBDPN\)](#), in partnership with [Centers for Disease Control & Prevention \(CDC\)](#), [March of Dimes](#), [MotherToBaby](#), [Association of Maternal & Child Health Programs \(AMCHP\)](#), and others. The contents of the awareness month materials and related promotional messaging are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by state public health agencies or other NBDPN members and partners.



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**NATIONAL BIRTH DEFECTS
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