



SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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National Birth Defects Prevention Month Seeks to Raise Awareness of Birth Defects

Contact: *(Name of person submitting release)*

(Phone here) – or – *(Email here)*

(Your City, Your State) – *(Your organization)* is joining the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN) to increase awareness of birth defects, the leading cause of infant mortality in the United States. In fact, every 4 ½ minutes, a baby is born with a birth defect. In honor of January as Birth Defects Prevention Month, *(your organization)* is actively focusing on raising awareness among healthcare professionals and the general public about the frequency with which birth defects occur in the United States and the steps that can be taken to prevent them. The risk for many types of birth defects can be reduced through healthy lifestyle choices and medical interventions before and during pregnancy.

There are many different kinds of birth defects including congenital heart defects, cleft lip or palate, defects of brain and spine, and a variety of genetic syndromes such as Down syndrome. Some have only a minor and brief effect on a baby's health and some have life-threatening and/or life-long effects.

More than 120,000 babies born with a birth defect (approximately 1 in 33 live births) are reported each year in the United States with around *(prevalence information for your state from your state's birth defects tracking system or other source)* cases occurring in *(name of your state)*. Birth defects are the most common cause of death in infants and the second most common cause of death in children aged one to four years. Public awareness, expert medical care, accurate and early diagnosis, and social support systems are all essential for optimal prevention and treatment of these all-too-common and often deadly conditions.

"Most people are unaware of how common, costly and critical birth defects are in the United States, or that there are simple steps that can be taken to reduce the risk of birth defects." says *(your contact)*.

"The health of both parents prior to pregnancy can affect the risk of having a child with a birth defect. Diet, life-style choices, factors in the environment, health conditions and medications before and during pregnancy all can play a role in preventing or increasing the risk of birth defects," says *(your contact)* of *(your organization)*.

Studies have demonstrated several important steps women can take to help prevent birth defects. Women who are pregnant or may become pregnant are advised to:

- Take 400mcg of folic acid *daily* from the beginning of menstruation through menopause.
- Eat a healthy diet and aim for a healthy weight.
- Keep diabetes under control.
- Get a medical checkup before pregnancy and address specific health issues including weight control, control of diabetes, and any medications taken.
- Stop smoking and avoid second-hand smoke.

- Stop drinking alcohol prior to pregnancy or as soon into pregnancy as possible.
- Do not take illegal drugs.
- Plan carefully. Use contraception if taking medications that increase the risk for birth defects.
- Know your family medical history and potential genetic risks.

“Small steps like visiting a healthcare provider before pregnancy and taking a multivitamin every day can go a long way,” says *(your contact’s last name)*. The NBDPN is working with healthcare professionals and public health agencies around the country to encourage prevention and awareness of birth defects among the over 60 million women of childbearing age in the United States. In addition to its efforts in prevention, the NBDPN works to improve nationwide surveillance of birth defects and to advance research on possible causes. It also offers support to families who are dealing with the realities of a child born with one of these conditions. Further information about NBDPN can be found at www.NBDPN.org.

(Your organization) is participating in National Birth Defects Prevention Month by *(add two details about your local activities, e.g., distributing information to women and their health care providers across the state, participating in health fairs, offering presentations at local schools. etc.)*. “We are excited to be part of this national campaign. Through our efforts across the country we plan to reach millions of women and their families with vital prevention information,” says *(your contact’s last name)*.

To learn more, please contact *(your organization)* at *(phone here)* or *(E-mail here)*.