

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Contact: *(Name of person submitting release)*
(Phone here) –or- (Email here)

National Birth Defects Prevention Month Brings Attention to Congenital Heart Defects

(Your City, Your State) – (Your organization) is joining the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN) to increase awareness on birth defects, the leading cause of infant mortality in the United States. January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month and this year *(your organization)* is actively focusing on helping healthcare professionals and the general public to take positive steps to reduce the risk of congenital heart defects. Congenital heart defects are one of the most common types of birth defect and some forms may be preventable through healthy life style choices and medical interventions before and during pregnancy. In addition to information about prevention, the NBDPN offers support to families who are dealing with the realities of a child born with one of these conditions.

Congenital heart defects include abnormalities of the heart that are present at birth. Some have only a minor and brief effect on a baby's health and some have very serious and life-long effects. Nearly 40,000 cases (approximately 1 in 110 live births) are reported annually in the US 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)*. Public awareness, accurate diagnosis, and expert medical care are all essential for adequate prevention and management of these all too common and deadly conditions.

“This is an important public health concern, and our goal is to make the general public aware of both possible prevention measures and early detection steps” says *(your contact)*.

“The heart forms in the early weeks of pregnancy, often before a woman realizes she is pregnant. Diet, life-style choices, factors in the environment, health conditions and medications all can play a role in preventing or causing congenital heart defects,” says *(your contact)* of *(your organization)*.

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

- Avoid all alcohol and illegal/recreational drugs.
- Avoid exposure to smoke, chemicals and toxins both at work and at home.
- Take a folic acid supplement and check with their healthcare provider to confirm that you are getting adequate amounts of all the essential nutrients.
- See a physician prior to pregnancy, especially if there are medical conditions which require medications, any known metabolic conditions including diabetes, obesity, phenylketonuria (PKU), or a family history of congenital heart defects. Diabetic or obese women should make sure that blood sugar is under control and work toward a healthy weight through a nutritious food plan prior to conception.
- Receive regular medical check-ups and educate themselves about their family history and potential genetic risks

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“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 National Birth Defects Prevention Network is working with healthcare professionals and public health agencies around the country to encourage prevention and awareness of congenital heart defects among the over 60 million women of childbearing age in the United States

(Your organization) is participating in National Birth Defects Prevention Month with *(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)*.

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