

Birth Defects Prevention Month – January 2011

Maternal Medication Use and Birth Defects

Sharing the Entire Packet

Reproduce this packet by downloading materials from the NBDPN website www.nbdpn.org and requesting copies of brochures from the creators. Most are available at no cost. Here are a few suggestions for packet dissemination:

- Health educators and school nurses at middle schools, high schools, colleges, and universities in your state can share materials with teachers and students.
- March of Dimes chapters, health care advocates like the Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Coalitions, and family support groups can promote information to policy makers.
- Your state's professional organizations, such as the American Medical Association, American Academy of Family Practice, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, nursing organizations, genetic associations and dietetic associations can share up-to-date materials through their meetings and conferences.
- Contact your state's Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Program; Reproductive Health and Family Planning Program; Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and Medicaid. Offer them enough packets to distribute to each of their offices around the state.
- Share the packet with your state's Chronic Disease Prevention and Control Program, Health Educators, and other interested providers who care for women of childbearing age taking medication.
- If your state has a Women's Commission, contact a representative or your agency's liaison and tell them about the work of the NBDPN and Birth Defects Prevention Month so they can let interested members know.
- Your state's Health and Hospital Association may be interested in issues surrounding medication use in women of childbearing age, and in helping spread prevention messages to individuals and their providers.
- Remember young women taking medication. Share the packet with your state Children's Special Health Care Services (CSHCS) Program. Your Child and Adolescent Health Centers (CAHC) Program can help get the word out to School-based Health Centers in your state.

Using Materials in this Packet

Individual activities and those conducted with partners at the state or community level will raise awareness about what can be done to promote healthy pregnancies and good birth outcomes.

- Contact state or local businesses. Companies may add information about medication use and birth defects to their corporate or wellness newsletters, sponsor events such as baby fairs, or donate door prizes such as folic-acid rich food baskets to bridal fairs, health fairs, and other community events.
- Share the important prevention messages and resources in the packet with staff at your state's Chronic Disease Prevention and Control Program. They may have ideas for distribution to local public health and other community partners.
- Ask local food banks, women's shelters, and other similar services to provide information to their clients.
- Ask community colleges and universities to place materials in their health center waiting rooms. Information about medication use, alcohol consumption, and the importance of folic acid is especially relevant, given the number of unplanned pregnancies.
- Supply pamphlets or fact sheets for patients and professionals to health care provider groups, such as managed care organizations, doctors' offices, clinics, and HMOs.
- Collaborate with hospitals or clinics on community outreach projects to promote the importance of addressing medication use *before* pregnancy. Topics may include: preconception counseling and healthy lifestyles.
- Volunteer to present information on medication use in pregnancy to professional groups such as nurses, nutritionists or genetic counselors, as well as community health workers and health advocacy groups.
- Connect with supportive partners in the media. Prepare public service announcement scripts and write educational articles that may be used or adapted by local media. Recruit a "birth defects prevention champion" for media interviews.
- Contact the Communications lead for your agency. Ask that Birth Defects Prevention Month and the packet be announced in the agency newsletter, in an "ALL" email or included as a stuffer in payroll envelopes.