



Greetings:

It is with great pleasure that we provide you with the materials for the 2013 National Birth Defects Prevention Month, which were developed over the past year by the National Birth Defects Prevention Network's Education and Outreach Committee.

Every year we select an area of focus in an effort to increase awareness of birth defects and to spark prevention activities across the country. For this year's campaign, we have chosen the slogan "Birth defects are common, costly, and critical." Birth defects affect 1 in every 33 babies born in the United States and are a leading cause of infant mortality. Babies who survive and live with birth defects are at increased risk for developing many lifelong physical, cognitive, and social challenges. Medical care and support services only scrape the surface of the financial and emotional impact of living with birth defects.

The good news is awareness efforts offer hope for reducing the number of birth defects in the future. The following prevention strategies can easily be promoted. Please encourage all pregnant women and those who may become pregnant to:

- consume 400 micrograms of folic acid daily
- manage chronic maternal illnesses such as diabetes, seizure disorders, or phenylketonuria (PKU)
- reach and maintain a healthy weight
- talk to a health care provider about taking any medications, both prescription and over-the-counter
- avoid alcohol, smoking, and illicit drugs
- see a health care provider regularly
- avoid toxic substances at work or at home
- ensure protection against domestic violence
- know their family history and seek reproductive genetic counseling, if appropriate

Please take the time to become familiar with the materials and complete the [Evaluation Form](#). We hope you find them useful for the education, outreach, and prevention activities that you conduct in your community. Materials developed by NBDPN are available on the NBDPN website and can be tailored to your specific agency's mission, needs and capacity. Materials from the other organizations featured can be obtained directly from the organizations themselves.

If you should have questions about National Birth Defects Prevention Month, please contact Mary Knapp (Mary.Knapp@doh.state.nj.us) or Cara Mai (cmmai@cdc.gov). We hope you find these materials helpful in providing information about birth defects to families, colleagues, and policy makers. *Thank you in advance for your support in promoting January as National Birth Defects Prevention Month.*

Sincerely,
Mary Knapp
LaShunda Williams
NBDPN Education & Outreach Committee Co-chairs