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'Healthy Communities, Healthy Babies.' Focus of National Birth Defects Prevention Month 2023 LEADING HEALTH EXPERTS EMPHASIZE 5 EFFECTIVE WAYS TO PREVENT BIRTH DEFECTS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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[**City, State**] –. Birth defects are structural changes that can affect almost any part of the body, such as the heart, brain, or foot, and can cause lifelong health challenges

As medical care and treatment have improved, babies and children with birth defects are living longer and healthier lives. Most are now living into adulthood. Recent reports show that rates of infant deaths due to birth defects have declined by 10% in the United States. However, even today, every 4½ minutes a baby is born with a major birth defect.

Further, there are persistent racial/ethnic disparities when considering healthy communities and healthy babies. *“Sadly, we continue to see racial disparities both in the occurrence of birth defects as well as in survival of children born with birth defects -- it is essential that we work together to better understand the causes of these racial disparities so they can be addressed,”* said Dr. Sonja Rasmussen, Professor of Genetic Medicine at John Hopkins School of Medicine and Board Member of the National Birth Defects Prevention Network.

Annually, the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN) raises awareness of birth defects and promotes strategies that reduce the risk of birth defects and their complications. National Birth Defects Awareness Month is a time to raise awareness about birth defects and highlight efforts to improve the health of people living with these conditions across their lifespan. Continuing the theme from 2022, NBDPN's theme this year is **“Healthy Communities, Healthy Babies.”** Not all birth defects can be prevented. However, we encourage all pregnant people and prospective parents to make healthy choices and adopt healthier habits to help lower their risk of having a baby born with a birth defect.

5 Tips for Preventing Birth Defects

- Tip 1: Be sure to take 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid every day at least one month prior to conception.
- Tip 2: Plan a visit with your healthcare provider to support a healthy pregnancy.
- Tip 3: Reduce your risk of infections.
- Tip 4: Care for your body and mind before and during pregnancy to set you and your baby up for success.
- Tip 5: Avoid harmful substances during pregnancy, such as alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

There is hope for a healthier future. Join NBDPN and our partners in improving health in your community. Consider adding provider and parent [resources to our interactive map](#) so that

together we can work towards a day when all babies are born with the best health possible.

The NBDPN education and awareness packet can be accessed online at <https://bit.ly/3xeN12U>. Thank you in advance for promoting these tips for healthy communities and healthy babies for National Birth Defects Awareness Month!

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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. Contact us at nbdpn.org for more information.

National Birth Defects Awareness Month materials and activities are an output of the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN). 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.