

# National Birth Defects Prevention Month

January 2017





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## Greetings

The National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN) Education and Outreach Committee is excited to share the 2017 National Birth Defects Prevention Month packet. This packet was developed in collaboration with many partners, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), and Teratology Society (TS).

The theme for 2017 is “**Prevent to Protect: Prevent infections for baby’s protection.**” We know that not all birth defects can be prevented. But, we also know that women can increase their chances of having a healthy baby by reducing their risk of getting an infection during pregnancy. Please encourage all pregnant women and those who may become pregnant to:

- **Properly prepare food.**
  - Wash your hands before and after preparing food.
  - Do not eat raw or runny eggs or raw sprouts.
  - Avoid unpasteurized (raw) milk and cheese, and other foods made from them.
- **Talk to your healthcare provider.**
  - Talk to your healthcare provider about what you can do to prevent infections such as Zika virus.
  - Make sure that you are up-to-date with vaccinations (shots) before getting pregnant.
  - Talk to your healthcare provider about vaccinations that you should receive during pregnancy.
- **Protect yourself from animals and insects known to carry diseases such as Zika virus.**
  - Stay away from wild or pet rodents, live poultry, lizards and turtles, and do not clean cat litter boxes while pregnant.
  - When mosquitoes and ticks are active, wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outside.
  - Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registered insect repellents with one of the following active ingredients: DEET, picaridin, IR3535, or oil of lemon eucalyptus (para-menthane-3,8-diol).
- **Maintain good hygiene.**
  - Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially
    - Before preparing or eating foods,
    - After handling raw meat, raw eggs, or unwashed vegetables,
    - After being around or touching pets and other animals,
    - After changing diapers or wiping runny noses.
  - Do not put a young child’s food, utensils, drinking cups, or pacifiers in your mouth.

NBDPN’s goal for 2017 is to continue the momentum from previous years, increasing awareness that birth defects are “Common, Costly, and Critical” and offering actionable steps that professionals, community groups, and the public can take to prevent birth defects. Specially-designed materials to help you spread the word and engage your communities are available on the [NBDPN website](#) and can be tailored to your specific agency’s mission, needs, and capacity. We hope you find these materials useful as you work to increase awareness of birth defects and highlight prevention activities during January and throughout the year.

If you should have questions about National Birth Defects Prevention Month, please contact Mary Knapp (Mary.Knapp@doh.nj.gov).

Thank you in advance for your support in promoting National Birth Defects Prevention Month.

Sincerely,

Mary Knapp

NBDPN Education & Outreach Committee Chair

## ● Sharing this Packet ●

Materials in this packet can be downloaded from NBDPN at [www.nbdpn.org](http://www.nbdpn.org). All materials can be printed, shared, and distributed as needed. Copies of brochures can be requested from their creators and most are available at no cost. Here are a few suggested groups or partners to target for packet dissemination:

**Schools:** Health educators and school nurses at middle schools, high schools, colleges, and universities in your state can share materials with teachers and students. Encourage school health education teachers to incorporate these messages into their lesson plans. Professors at Schools of Nursing and Public Health at both the undergraduate and graduate levels might want to include information in their curricula.

**Non-profit organizations that have a similar mission:** March of Dimes chapters, advocacy groups, and family support groups, like Family Voices, can promote information to policy makers.

**Local chapters of professional societies:** Your state's chapter of professional organizations, such as the American Medical Association, American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American Public Health Association, nursing organizations, and genetic associations can share up-to-date materials through their meetings, newsletters, and conferences.

**Local services:** Share the information packet with your state's established health programs, including Maternal and Child Health (MCH); Children's Special Health Care Services (CSHCS); Reproductive Health; Family Planning; Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); and Medicaid. The Fetal and Infant Mortality Review Program (FIMR) in your state may be interested in prevalence and mortality statistics and prevention resources.

**Other health programs in your state:** This message complements messaging for many disease prevention programs. Promote these materials to your state health department partners and call on them to help disseminate these resources in order to maximize impact.

**Local health departments & hospitals:** If your state has local public health departments, share this packet with each department. Your state's Health and Hospital Association and healthcare provider organizations may be interested in issues surrounding birth defects and in helping spread prevention messages to their members.

**Women's services:** Remember that young women are an important demographic to target. Child and Adolescent Health Centers (CAHC), school-based health centers, family planning clinics, and physician groups can incorporate prevention messages into their programs and their conversations with patients.



## ● Using Materials in this Packet ●

Are you interested in participating in National Birth Defects Prevention Month, but you aren't sure how? We make it easy for you with this list of ideas! Each activity can be done individually or in coordination with partners at the state or community level to raise awareness about birth defects and steps that can be taken to promote healthy pregnancies and positive birth outcomes. We invite you to use the packet to design your own promotions, pick and choose relevant content for your audiences, and copy or adapt contents to take advantage of particular news or issues in your community. Here are a few ideas:

### Distribute to local public health and other partners:

Send the packet to your local public health departments and other community partners. These partners could include local grantees, non-profits, provider's offices, or clinics.

Send the packet over email as an attachment or as a link to the [NBDPN website](#). You could break down the packet into chunks or tailor the contents to include materials most relevant to partners. For example, send sample drop-in articles to partners to include in their newsletters or post on their websites. Encourage partners to ask you questions, share resources, and tell you about things they use from the packet.

### Create a buzz with social media:

Using social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest) is a popular way to quickly spread messages to your target audience. Use compelling images and videos to generate interest in your message and link to the National Birth Defects Prevention Network website or your organization's Birth Defects Prevention Month webpage.



### Prepare a table at events or in your building:

Use the content, wording, and graphics from the packet to stock an informational table. You can create a tri-fold display, handouts for people to take, and more! Staff the table to answer questions, or leave it set up for people to browse. Partners could do this in their locations as well.

### Make news:

Customize the sample news release with information, stories, or events happening in your community. Submit news releases, articles, and op-eds to local news venues to publish, post on websites, or share through social media.

## ● Prevent to Protect Theme Resources ●

This is not a complete guide to preventing infections during pregnancy. Be sure to talk with your healthcare provider to learn more about how you can help prevent infections that could harm your baby.

1

### Properly prepare food.

Pregnant women and their babies are at increased risk of contracting the bacteria and viruses that cause foodborne illness. Foodborne illness during pregnancy can cause serious health problems for your baby, including prematurity and stillbirth. Some foodborne illnesses, such as [listeriosis](#) and [toxoplasmosis](#), can infect your baby even if you do not have symptoms of foodborne illness. Make safe food handling a priority for you and your baby while pregnant.

#### What you can do to properly prepare food:

- **Wash your hands before and after preparing food.**

Many diseases and conditions are spread by not washing hands with soap and clean, running water. Germs from unwashed hands can get into foods and drinks while people prepare or consume them. Germs can multiply in some types of foods or drinks, under certain conditions, and make people sick.

- **Do not eat raw or runny eggs or raw sprouts.**

Raw or undercooked eggs and raw sprouts can contain [Salmonella](#), a bacteria which can be passed to your baby during pregnancy. Cook egg dishes until they have an internal temperature of 160 degrees and cook eggs until the yoke and white are firm.

- **Avoid unpasteurized (raw) milk and cheese and other foods made from them.**

Soft cheeses made from unpasteurized milk can contain [Listeria](#), a harmful bacteria. Only buy soft cheese and milk with the word “pasteurized” on the label. Pasteurized means that the milk was heated to a high enough temperature for a long enough time to kill illness-causing bacteria.

- **Clean, separate, cook, and chill food.**

USDA, FDA, CDC, and the Ad Council recommend that everyone take these steps for general safe food preparation:

*Clean:* Wash hands and surfaces often.

*Separate:* Don't cross-contaminate.

*Cook:* Cook to safe temperatures.

*Chill:* Refrigerate promptly.



## Resources for Women/Families

### Food Safety for Pregnant Women | FoodSafety.gov

<https://www.foodsafety.gov/risk/pregnant/index.html>

Food safety steps that will keep expecting moms safe from foodborne illness.

### Listeria Prevention | CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/listeria/prevention.html>

How to reduce your risk for listeriosis during pregnancy.

### Check your Steps: Clean, Separate, Cook, and Chill | FoodSafety.gov

<https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/basics/index.html>

Four easy steps to protect you and your family from foodborne illness.

### Food Safety: Raw Milk Questions and Answers | CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/rawmilk/raw-milk-questions-and-answers.html>

Learn more about how drinking raw milk can cause infections.

### While you're Pregnant: What is Foodborne Illness? | FDA

<http://www.fda.gov/Food/ResourcesForYou/HealthEducators/ucm083316.htm>

Learn about foodborne illness and how to prevent certain foodborne risks during your pregnancy.

### Preventing Salmonellosis during Pregnancy | March of Dimes

<http://www.marchofdimes.org/pregnancy/salmonellosis.aspx>

Learn more about what you can do to help prevent salmonellosis during pregnancy.

### Toxoplasmosis: Reduce Risk from Food | CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/toxoplasmosis/prevent.html>

Learn how you can prevent risk of toxoplasmosis and other infections from food.

## 2

## Talk to your healthcare provider.

Whether you are planning to become pregnant or not, talk to your healthcare provider about reproductive and preconception health care. Talk to your healthcare provider about what you can do to prevent infections, including Zika virus and sexually transmitted diseases (referred to as STIs or STDs), before and during pregnancy, make sure that you are up-to-date with vaccinations (shots) before getting pregnant, and talk to your healthcare provider about vaccinations that you should receive during pregnancy.

Consider discussing these topics with your healthcare provider to reduce your risk of getting an infection during pregnancy:

### Throughout Your Pregnancy

#### Influenza (Flu) Shot

Get a flu shot during any trimester of your pregnancy to protect from flu.

#### Foodborne Illness

See your healthcare provider immediately if you show any signs of food borne illness, such as fever, stomach pain, and vomiting. Your healthcare provider can prescribe the appropriate antibiotics, if needed.

#### Travel

Talk to your doctor before making any travel decisions that will take you far from home. Depending on your travel destination, you may need to receive certain vaccines and medicines before traveling.

### Trimester 1 (Weeks 1-12)

#### Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

Get tested for chlamydia, syphilis, hepatitis B, herpes simplex virus type II, and HIV at your first prenatal visit.

### Trimester 2 (Weeks 13-28)

#### Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs)

Get tested for UTIs, which are infections of the kidney, bladder, or urinary tract. Pregnant women should have their urine tested as a part of routine pregnancy care.

#### Group B streptococcus (GBS)

GBS is a bacteria that can cause serious health problems in newborn babies. If you think you might have a C-section or go into labor early, talk with your healthcare provider about making a GBS plan.

### Trimester 3 (Weeks 29-40)

#### Group B streptococcus (GBS)

GBS is a bacteria that can cause serious health problems in newborn babies. Get tested for group B strep bacteria when you are 35 to 37 weeks pregnant.

#### Pertussis (Whooping Cough) Shot

Pertussis, also known as **whooping cough**, is a highly contagious disease that causes violent coughing. Get the pertussis shot (Tdap) when you are 27-36 weeks pregnant.



## Resources for Women/Families

### **Maternal Vaccines: Part of a Healthy Pregnancy | CDC**

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pregnancy/pregnant-women/index.html>

CDC guidelines for the vaccines you need before, during, and after pregnancy.

### **STDs during Pregnancy | CDC**

<http://www.cdc.gov/std/pregnancy/stdfact-pregnancy-detailed.htm>

Details on the effects of specific STIs during a woman's pregnancy with links to web pages with additional information.

### **Group B Strep (GBS) Prevention in Newborns | CDC**

<http://www.cdc.gov/groupbstrep/about/prevention.html>

Strategies to prevent GBS in newborn infants.

### **Health Information for Travelers | CDC**

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list>

Learn actions you can take to stay healthy and safe on your trip.

### **Travel Health Notices | CDC**

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>

Travel notices are designed to inform travelers and clinicians about current health issues related to specific destinations. Check this list before traveling.

### **Pregnant Women & Influenza (Flu) | CDC**

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/pregnant.htm>

Learn more about flu prevention and pregnant women.

### **Get the Whooping Cough Vaccine While You Are Pregnant | CDC**

<http://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/pregnant/mom/get-vaccinated.html>

Learn more about receiving the whooping cough vaccine during pregnancy.

### **Urinary Tract Infections during Pregnancy | American Academy of Family Physicians**

<http://www.aafp.org/afp/2000/0201/p721.html>

Learn more about UTIs during pregnancy.

## 3

## Protect yourself from animals and insects known to carry diseases.

Pregnant women have to be careful about how they handle and care for animals. Pets can carry bacteria, viruses, and parasites that can cause several infections that can harm you and your baby, including [toxoplasmosis](#), [lymphocytic choriomeningitis virus \(LCMV\)](#), and [salmonellosis](#).

Pregnant women should also take steps to reduce their risk of being bitten by a mosquito. Mosquitos can carry several infections, including [West Nile virus](#), [Dengue virus](#), [malaria](#), and [Zika virus](#). Zika infection during pregnancy can cause a serious birth defect called [microcephaly](#) a sign of incomplete brain development.



### What you can do to protect yourself from animals and insects:

- **Stay away from wild or pet rodents, live poultry, lizards and turtles, and do not clean cat litter boxes while pregnant.**

Have a pest control professional get rid of pests in or around your home. If you have a pet rodent, like a hamster or guinea pig, have someone else care for it until after your baby arrives. Some rodents might carry a harmful virus. [Wash your hands](#) well with soap and water after contact with your pets, and their tanks or poop.

Dirty cat litter might contain a harmful parasite called [Toxoplasma gondii](#), which causes [toxoplasmosis](#). Have your partner, a friend, or family member change used cat litter for you. If you must change the litter yourself, be sure to wear gloves and wash your hands afterwards.

- **When mosquitoes are active,**

- **Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outside.**

Mosquitos can carry several infections, including [West Nile virus](#), [Dengue virus](#), [malaria](#), and [Zika virus](#). Ticks can also carry many infections, such as [Lyme disease](#). These infections can be dangerous to your unborn baby. Lyme disease that goes untreated can cause brain, nerve, spinal cord, and heart problems while Zika infection during pregnancy can cause a serious birth defect called [microcephaly](#).

Mosquitos are most active at dusk and dawn while ticks are active at all times of the day, typically in warmer months. Minimizing areas of exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants, boots, and hats can help prevent bites.

- **Use [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\) registered insect repellents](#) with one of the following active ingredients: DEET, picaridin, IR3535, or oil of lemon eucalyptus (para-menthane-3,8-diol).**

Insect repellants prevent bites by making people less attractive to mosquitos and ticks. When used as directed, EPA-registered insect repellents are proven safe and effective, even for pregnant and breastfeeding women.

## Resources for Women/Families

### **Caring for Pets when you're Pregnant | March of Dimes**

<http://www.marchofdimes.org/pregnancy/pets-and-other-animals-during-pregnancy.aspx>

A guide to handling and caring for pets safely during pregnancy.

### **Diseases from Rodents | CDC**

<http://www.cdc.gov/rodents/diseases/index.html>

Details diseases that are directly and indirectly transmitted by rodents.

### **Avoid Bug Bites | CDC**

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/avoid-bug-bites>

Prevent bug bites-what to know before you go!

### **Find the Insect Repellent that is Right for You | EPA**

<https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-insect-repellent-right-you>

Use the search tool to help you choose the repellent product that is right for you. You can specify the insect, protection time, active ingredient, or other product-specific information.

### **Zika Virus-Protect yourself & Others | CDC**

<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/prevention/protect-yourself-and-others.html>

Tips to help protect you, your partner, your family, your friends, and your community from Zika.

### **Avoid Mosquito Bites | CDC**

<http://www.cdc.gov/Features/stopmosquitoes/index.html>

Feature on preventing diseases like Zika, dengue, and chikungunya that are spread by mosquitoes.

## 4

## Maintain good hygiene.

Hygiene refers to the activities that help prevent the spread of infections. Personal hygiene can include hand washing, bathing, and brushing your teeth. Maintaining good hygiene is one of the simplest steps that women can take to prevent infections. Many diseases and conditions are spread by not maintaining good hygiene, including [salmonellosis](#), [norovirus](#), [adenovirus](#), and [hand, foot, and mouth disease](#).

### What you can do to maintain good hygiene:

- **Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially**
  - **Before preparing foods or eating foods,**
  - **After handling raw meat, raw eggs, or unwashed vegetables,**
  - **After being around or touching pets or other animals,**
  - **After changing diapers or wiping runny noses.**

Regular handwashing is one of the best ways to remove germs and prevent the spread of germs to others. Learn more about how and when to wash your hands: <http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>.

- **Do not put a young child's food, utensils, drinking cups, or pacifiers in your mouth.**

Children's saliva or urine may contain a virus called [cytomegalovirus \(CMV\)](#), which women can pass to their baby during pregnancy. Always remember to wash your hands after coming in contact with any bodily fluids, such as saliva or urine.



### Resources for Women/Families

#### When & How to Wash Your Hands | CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>

Learn more about when and how to wash your hands, the importance of using soap and water, and what you can do if soap and clean, running water are not available.

#### Cytomegalovirus and Pregnancy | March of Dimes

<http://www.marchofdimes.org/complications/cytomegalovirus-and-pregnancy.aspx>

Learn how you can protect yourself from CMV.

#### Toxoplasmosis: Reduce Risk from the Environment | CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/parasites/toxoplasmosis/prevent.html>

Learn how you can prevent risk of toxoplasmosis from the environment.

#### Prevention & Treatment-Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease | CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/hand-foot-mouth/about/prevention-treatment.html>

Learn how you can lower your risk of being infected with hand, foot, and mouth disease.

#### Pregnancy-Staying Safe and Healthy: Oral Health | Office on Women's Health

<http://womenshealth.gov/pregnancy/you-are-pregnant/staying-healthy-safe.html#c>

Learn more about important oral health tips for pregnant women.

## ● Sample Proclamation ●

### National Birth Defects Prevention Month, January 2017

Birth defects are common, costly, and critical. While many unknown factors play a role in birth defects occurrence, steps can be taken to help prevent or limit certain risks for birth defects, such as exposure to chemicals in the home or at work, use of alcohol and street drugs, a lack of folic acid in a woman's diet, lack of prenatal care, and infections during pregnancy.

Whereas, Every 4 ½ minutes, a U.S. baby is born with a birth defect. Birth defects are a leading cause of death in the first year of life, causing one in every five infant deaths. These conditions lead to \$2.6 billion per year in hospital costs alone in the United States. In *(name of your state)* birth defects account for about ### infant deaths every year; and

Whereas, Birth defects can occur in any family regardless of race, ethnicity, health history, economic status, or level of education; and

Whereas, About half of all pregnancies are unplanned, contributing to late entry into prenatal care and presenting a barrier to optimal pregnancy management, particularly during the crucial first weeks of a baby's development; and

Whereas, Early identification of a child with a birth defect coupled with early intervention services typically improves the child's quality of life and may even save his or her life; and

Whereas, Taking steps to avoid infections during pregnancy can reduce the chance that a child is born with a birth defect. The National Birth Defects Prevention Network and CDC encourage parents-to-be to reduce the chance of developing an infection during pregnancy by observing the following guidelines:

- Properly prepare food.
- Talk to your healthcare provider.
- Protect yourself from animals and insects known to carry diseases such as Zika virus.
- Maintain good hygiene.

Whereas, The good health and well-being of the people of *(state name)* are enhanced by the support of a national effort to educate about preconception health and strategies to prevent birth defects; and

Whereas, The *(name of your state Department of Health Services)* and the *(name of your state Birth Defects Monitoring Program)* join with the March of Dimes, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the National Birth Defects Prevention Network, as well as many dedicated volunteers, healthcare professionals, and parent groups by participating in this promotion.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, -----, Governor of the State of -----, do hereby proclaim January 2017 as  
NATIONAL BIRTH DEFECTS PREVENTION MONTH.

## ● Drop-In Articles ●

### January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month (64 words)

In the United States, a baby is born with a birth defect every 4 ½ minutes. Some infections before and during pregnancy can hurt both mothers and their babies. All mothers can **prevent infections to protect their babies** by properly preparing food, talking to their healthcare provider, protecting themselves from animals and insects known to carry diseases, and maintaining good hygiene. Learn more: [www.nbdpn.org](http://www.nbdpn.org)

### January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month (81 words)

Birth defects are common, costly, and critical. Infections before and during pregnancy can have serious consequences for the mother-to-be and the developing baby. Join the effort to raise awareness of birth defects. We encourage all mothers to **prevent infections to protect their babies** by properly preparing food, talking to their healthcare provider, protecting themselves from animals and insects known to carry diseases, and maintaining good hygiene. Learn more: [www.nbdpn.org](http://www.nbdpn.org) Share your own tips for healthy pregnancy using #Prevent2Protect on social media.

### January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month (171 words)

Birth defects are common, costly, and critical. Every 4 ½ minutes a baby is born with a major birth defect in the United States. Become an active participant in National Birth Defects Prevention Month by joining the nationwide effort to raise awareness of birth defects, their causes and their impact.

Infections during pregnancy can hurt both mothers and their babies. We encourage all women to make healthy choices and learn different strategies to prevent infections during pregnancy to help lower their risk of having a baby born with a birth defect. This year we are encouraging all women to **prevent infections to protect their babies** by observing the following guidelines:

- **Properly prepare food.**
- **Talk to your healthcare provider.**
- **Protect yourself from animals and insects known to carry diseases such as Zika virus.**
- **Maintain good hygiene.**

Women and their loved ones can participate in these strategies and take these important steps toward a healthy pregnancy. Share your own tips for a healthy pregnancy using #Prevent2Protect on social media. Learn more at [www.nbdpn.org](http://www.nbdpn.org).

## January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month (383 words)

Birth defects are common, costly, and critical. Every 4½ minutes, a baby is born with a major birth defect in the United States. Become an active participant in National Birth Defects Prevention Month by joining the nationwide effort to raise awareness of birth defects, their causes, and their impact.

Infections during pregnancy can hurt both mothers and their babies. We encourage all women to make healthy choices and learn different strategies to prevent infections during pregnancy to help lower their risk of having a baby born with a birth defect. This year we are encouraging all women to **prevent infections to protect their babies** by observing the following guidelines:

- **Properly prepare food.**
  - Wash your hands before and after preparing food.
  - Do not eat raw or runny eggs or raw sprouts.
  - Avoid unpasteurized (raw) milk and cheese, and other foods made from them.
- **Talk to your healthcare provider.**
  - Talk to your healthcare provider about what you can do to prevent infections such as Zika virus.
  - Make sure that you are up-to-date with vaccinations (shots) before getting pregnant.
  - Talk to your healthcare provider about vaccinations that you should receive during pregnancy.
- **Protect yourself from animals and insects known to carry diseases such as Zika virus.**
  - Stay away from wild or pet rodents, live poultry, lizards and turtles, and do not clean cat litter boxes while pregnant.
  - When mosquitoes and ticks are active, wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outside.
  - Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registered insect repellents with one of the following active ingredients: DEET, picaridin, IR3535, or oil of lemon eucalyptus (para-menthane-3,8-diol).
- **Maintain good hygiene.**
  - Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially
    - Before preparing or eating foods,
    - After handling raw meat, raw eggs, or unwashed vegetables,
    - After being around or touching pets and other animals,
    - After changing diapers or wiping runny noses.
  - Do not put a young child's food, utensils, drinking cups, or pacifiers in your mouth.

Women and their loved ones can participate in these strategies and take these important steps toward a healthy pregnancy. Share your own tips for a healthy pregnancy using #Prevent2Protect on social media. Learn more at [www.nbdpn.org](http://www.nbdpn.org).

## ● Sample News Release ●

### National Birth Defects Prevention Month 2017 - Prevent to Protect: Prevent Infections for Baby's Protection (Long version)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
January 1, 2017

Contact: *(Name of person submitting release)*  
*(Phone here) – or – (Email here)*

*(Your City, Your State) – (Your organization)* is joining with the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the American Academy of Pediatrics, the March of Dimes, and the Teratology Society to increase awareness that preventing infections before and during pregnancy can protect babies from being born with birth defects. January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month. The theme for 2017 is **“Prevent to Protect: Prevent Infections for Baby's Protection”**

As part of National Birth Defects Prevention Month - 2017, *(your organization)* is encouraging the general public, as well as healthcare professionals, educators, and social service professionals to support this effort to raise awareness. Every 4½ minutes, a baby is born with a birth defect in the United States. Not all birth defects can be prevented. But, women can increase their chances of having a healthy baby by preventing infections before and during pregnancy.

This year we are encouraging all women to **Prevent to Protect** by taking the following steps:

- **Properly prepare food.**
- **Talk to your healthcare provider.**
- **Protect yourself from animals and insects known to carry diseases such as Zika virus.**
- **Maintain good hygiene.**

By following these **Prevent to Protect** guidelines, women can reduce the risk of having a child with a birth defect and also reduce their risk of pregnancy complications such as early pregnancy loss, prematurity and stillbirths.

About 120,000 babies are affected by birth defects 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)*. Not only can birth defects lead to lifelong challenges and disabilities, they are also the most common cause of death in the first year of life 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 needed for prevention and treatment of these all-too-common and sometimes deadly conditions.

“Most people don't know 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's full name)* of *(your organization)*.

“We know that infections are a major cause of birth defects. Research has proven that up-to-date vaccinations, safe sexual practices, good hygiene, and knowing of how to protect yourself from insect, animal and food-borne sources of infection can reduce the risk of having a child with a birth defect.” says *(your contact's last name)*.

“Steps like up-to-date vaccinations, avoiding infections, visiting a healthcare provider well before pregnancy, controlling your weight through healthy diet and activity, and taking a multivitamin every day, can go a long way in assuring a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby,” 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 and their partners. In addition to efforts in prevention, the NBDPN works to improve nationwide tracking of birth defects, and to advance

research into 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 the NBDPN can be found at [www.NBDPN.org](http://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 and an opportunity to prevent birth defects.” says (your contact’s last name). You can contact (your organization) at (phone here) or (E-mail here).*

(Your organization) encourages you to be an active participant in National Birth Defects Prevention Month. Learn more by following “National Birth Defects Prevention Network” on Facebook and **#Prevent2Protect** on Twitter. The complete 2017 NBDPN Birth Defects Prevention Month information packet, including this year’s primary message of prevention, ***Prevent to Protect: Prevent Infections for Baby’s Protection***, and other resources for the public, and for professionals, is available online at: [www.nbdpn.org/bdpm#2017.php](http://www.nbdpn.org/bdpm#2017.php). All materials can be printed, electronically conveyed, or added to websites for distribution as needed. Further information regarding NBDPN, as well as past National Birth Defect Prevention Month packets, can be obtained at [www.NBDPN.org](http://www.NBDPN.org). Further information on birth defects can also be found at [www.CDC.gov/ncbddd](http://www.CDC.gov/ncbddd).

## ●Drop-In E-Articles Targeting Pediatric Healthcare Providers ●

### January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month ([66 words](#))

In the United States, a baby is born with a birth defect every 4 ½ minutes. Some infections before and during pregnancy can hurt both mothers and their babies. Healthy behaviors can **prevent infections to protect babies**. These include properly preparing food, talking about sexually transmitted diseases, assuring adequate vaccination, protecting against animals and insects known to carry diseases, and maintaining good hygiene. Learn more: [www.nbdpn.org](http://www.nbdpn.org)

### January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month ([83 words](#))

Birth defects are common, costly, and critical. Prevention of infections such as those caused by the flu, sexually transmitted diseases and infections carried by insects and animals are critical to reducing the risks for birth defects. Pediatricians can partner with families to **prevent infections to protect babies**. Talk with families about proper food preparation, vaccination, protection from animals and insects known to carry diseases, and maintaining good hygiene. Learn more: [www.nbdpn.org](http://www.nbdpn.org) Share your own tips for healthy pregnancy using #Prevent2Protect on social media.

### January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month ([216 words](#))

Birth defects are common, costly, and critical. Every 4 ½ minutes a baby is born with a major birth defect in the United States. Pediatricians and other pediatric health care providers can be active participants in National Birth Defects Prevention Month by joining the nationwide effort to raise awareness of birth defects, their causes, and their impact.

Infections during pregnancy can hurt both mothers and their babies. Healthy choices and prevention strategies improve the chances that babies will be born healthy. Everyone can do their part to **prevent infections to protect babies** by observing the following guidelines:

- **Properly prepare food.**  
Find family friendly tips for preventing [salmonella](#), [listeriosis](#) and the dangers of [raw milk products](#).
- **Talk to your patients about prevention of infections.**  
Access resources to [prevent the flu](#) and [overcome vaccine hesitancy](#).
- **Protect against animals and insects known to carry diseases such as Zika virus.**  
Stay abreast of developments in [congenital Zika virus](#) and support families in their [use of insect repellents](#).
- **Maintain good hygiene.**  
Reinforce [hand washing as a powerful antidote](#) to illness.

Pediatricians and pediatric clinicians can participate in these strategies and take these important steps toward prevention of birth defects. Share your own tips for a healthy pregnancy using #Prevent2Protect on social media. Learn more at [www.nbdpn.org](http://www.nbdpn.org).

## ● Sample Letter to Healthcare Providers ●

Dear Medical Professionals and Health Care Providers (or *individual's name*):

*January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month!* Prevention of infections that can cause birth defects is the theme for 2017. The National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN), in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the March of Dimes, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Teratology Society, has put together a resource packet titled “**Prevent to Protect: Prevent Infections for Baby’s Protection**”. It is designed to raise awareness that some infections can cause birth defects, and that many of these infections are preventable.

This year (“*I*”, “*We*”, or *YOUR ORGANIZATION’S NAME*) (am/are/is) encouraging you to work with your patients and the community to prevent current and future infections that can not only affect the patient’s health, but also cause birth defects in developing babies. The **Prevent to Protect** packet contains up-to-date, targeted information for professionals, their patients, and interested members of the general public.

The key messages this year are:

- **Properly prepare food.**
- **Talk to your healthcare provider.**
- **Protect yourself from animals and insects known to carry diseases such as Zika virus.**
- **Maintain good hygiene.**

Medical professionals are a powerful part of this campaign by working to assure that all of their patients are up-to-date on their vaccinations against rubella, varicella and influenza. Additionally, making patients aware of effective ways to prevent, detect and treat sexually transmitted infections, including the newly emergent Zika virus, is a forward-thinking way of preventing future birth defects.

Regardless of your specialty or the age group you serve, you are in a prime position to affect the occurrence of birth defects in the United States by reducing the risk of infections in your own patients and, thus, across the population. Ultimately, these efforts will lead to a healthier future for children and families, and reduce the personal and societal burden of disabilities and health care costs.

You can make a significant difference. (We/I) urge you to join (me/us) as an active participant in *National Birth Defects Prevention Month - 2017* and to continue your efforts throughout the year. You can access the **Prevent to Protect** packet online at: [www.nbdpn.org/bdpm#2017.php](http://www.nbdpn.org/bdpm#2017.php). All materials can be printed, copied electronically, or embedded in webpages and newsletters free of charge. Archives of past packets focusing on other measures for preventing birth defects are also available.

(I/we have a limited quantity of preprinted materials that you can request.) If (I/we) can help you or your patients further, please feel free to let (me/us) know how.

Sincerely,

(*Your own name if appropriate or your organization*)

## ● Sample Letter to Pediatric Healthcare Providers ●

Dear (Pediatric Healthcare Provider):

The theme for the 2017 Birth Defects Prevention Month is “Prevent to Protect: Prevent Infections for Baby’s Protection”. You and your colleagues in pediatric healthcare play an important role in the prevention of birth defects through your involvement in actively promoting vaccinations, and in educating patients and families on how to avoid infections throughout life.

As you regularly witness first-hand in your practice, birth defects can have far-reaching effects on the lives of children and their families. While many unknown factors play a role in the occurrence of birth defects, infection prevention is one of the simple steps that you can teach and encourage during routine pediatric care.

The National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN), in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the March of Dimes and the Teratology Society, has developed an educational resource packet designed to raise awareness that certain infections contracted before and during pregnancy can increase the risk of having a baby born with a birth defect. The packet includes the lay-targeted infographic “Prevent to Protect: Prevent Infections for Baby’s Protection”, along with other lay and professional resources that can help you and your staff raise awareness of the connection between infections and birth defects.

Health supervision visits provide an ideal time to vaccinate for the influenza virus and assure adherence to age appropriate vaccination schedules for rubella and other preventable diseases. This is also a good time to remind everyone that handwashing and safe food preparation are powerful tools in preventing infections. Information on avoiding animal, insect and food-borne illnesses, including those that may cause birth defects, is often best received by patients and parents when it comes directly from a trusted medical professional like you.

Adolescence is an important window of opportunity to again assure that patients are current on all vaccinations and to guide youth toward assuming responsibility for protecting themselves and others from preventable infections. Offering education on the importance of preventing sexually transmitted diseases (e.g. chlamydia, syphilis, HIV, and the newly emerging Zika virus) will help to lower the risk of birth defects as your patients enter their child-bearing years.

Prescribing 400 mcg of folic acid (from multivitamins or fortified foods), in addition to recommending a diet rich in natural folates, every day for every young woman starting from the time of her first menstrual period and continuing until her reproductive years are over, will reduce the risk of many types of birth defects, including those caused by high fevers during pregnancy.

With your unique ability to affect the health of both children and parents, pediatricians and pediatric healthcare providers play a key role in the lifelong prevention of birth defects.

You have the power to make a difference. (I/We) urge you to join (me/us) as an active participant in *National Birth Defects Prevention Month - 2017* and to continue your efforts throughout the year. You can access the **Prevent to Protect** packet (as well as archives of past birth defect prevention packets with other themes) online at: [www.nbdpn.org/bdpm#2017.php](http://www.nbdpn.org/bdpm#2017.php). If (I/we) can help you or your patients further, please feel free contact (me/us) at any time.

Sincerely, (Your own name if appropriate or your organization)

## ● Fact Sheet for Policy Makers ●

### Birth Defects Tracking, Research & Prevention

Tracking where and when birth defects occur and who they affect is a first step in preventing them. Tracking and research help us understand if the number of birth defects is increasing or decreasing over time, investigate possible causes, expand our understanding of preventive measures, and plan for health and education services for families of children with special needs.

### Birth Defects: Common, Costly, and Critical

Common 1 in 33 babies	Costly \$2.6 billion	Critical 1 in 5 deaths
Birth defects affect 1 in every 33 babies born in the United States. [Insert state numbers]	Each year, total hospital costs for U.S. children and adults exceed \$2.6 billion.	Birth defects cause 1 in every 5 deaths among babies in their first year of life.

### Real Families, Real Stories

Meet Ashley. She was born with gastroschisis, a birth defect which caused her intestines to be located on the outside of her body at birth. The beginning of her life was filled with surgeries and tests, setbacks and worry. Her mother, Kayte, says, “Ashley has a resiliency that other kids her age don’t possess... Although her life was initially filled with challenges, Ashley is blossoming into a remarkable young girl who has inspired countless other families with her story.” Ashley represents 1 in every 33 babies born in the United States.



### Importance of Birth Defects Tracking and Research

The value of birth defects tracking programs on clinical and public health research cannot be overstated. This work has revolutionized the way researchers, clinicians, and healthcare professionals approach, treat, and manage babies affected by birth defects. Tracking and research help us understand if the number of birth defects is increasing or decreasing over time, investigate possible causes, expand our understanding of preventive measures, and plan for health and education services for families of children with special needs. Identifying birth defects at a state level also strengthens public health officials’ ability to estimate prevalence and evaluate risk factors that are most important to their community.

### <STATE> Birth Defects Tracking System

Since <YEAR>, the <BIRTH DEFECT TRACKING PROGRAM (BDTP)> has monitored the prevalence of birth defects in <STATE>. The <BDTP> is a statewide, population-based surveillance program with information on approximately <STATE SPECIFIC NUMBER> babies born with specific birth defects. The <BDTP> was established to identify and describe the patterns and trends of birth defects in <STATE>, provide education and outreach, investigate potential causes, and respond to community concerns about possible clusters of birth defects. These data are essential for understanding the impact of birth defects in <STATE>.

## ● Educational Material for Men ●

**Dads play an important part in a healthy pregnancy.  
You have a role in preventing infections for baby's protection.**

When David thought about his future and the dad he wanted to be, he made a commitment to himself to provide for his family as best he could. But as he talked with his healthcare provider, he was reminded that his commitment to his family starts even before his children are born. As a dad, he will contribute half of the biological building blocks for his children. Keeping himself healthy will help him pass along healthy genes and give his children their best chance at a healthy start.

**Like David, you may be thinking about the family you may have one day. Here are some tips to help you prepare, get healthy and reduce the risk of infection for you and your partner.**



- **Properly prepare food.**
  - Wash your hands before and after preparing food for you and your partner.
  - Do not serve raw or runny eggs or raw sprouts to your partner.
- **Maintain good hygiene.**
  - Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially
    - Before preparing or eating food
    - After handling raw meat, raw eggs, or unwashed vegetables
- **Protect yourself and your partner from animals and insects known to carry diseases such as Zika virus.**
  - Change used cat litter so that your partner doesn't have to touch it.
  - Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registered insect repellents with one of the following active ingredients: DEET, picaridin, IR3535, or oil of lemon eucalyptus (para-menthane-3,8-diol). Help your partner spray or rub insect repellent into her skin.
  - If you have **traveled to an area with Zika**, use condoms correctly, **every time** you have vaginal, anal, or oral sex or **do not have sex** for the entire pregnancy.
- **Talk to your healthcare provider.**
  - Talk to your healthcare provider about what you can do to prevent infections, including sexually transmitted infections.
  - Talk to your healthcare provider about vaccinations (shots) that you and your partner should receive before and during the pregnancy.

### **Other ways to help prepare and get healthy.**

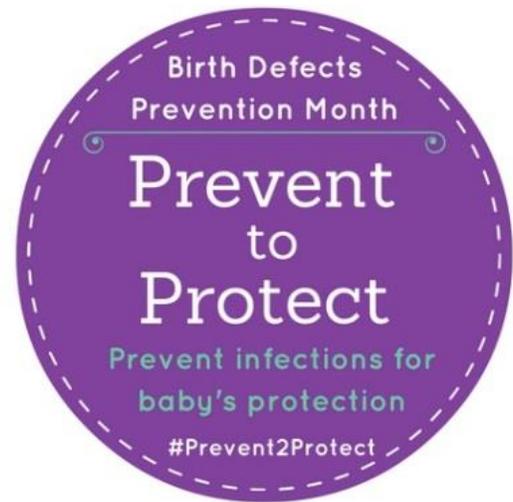
- **Choose a healthy lifestyle.**
  - Incorporate healthy eating and regular physical activity into your daily routine.
  - Take a multivitamin with 400 mcg of [folic acid](#) daily.
  - Talk to your healthcare provider about fertility, weight management, or other health issues.
- **Avoid harmful substances.**
  - Protect yourself and your partner by quitting smoking and avoiding secondhand smoke and air pollution.
  - Do not [drink excessively](#) or use "street" drugs, such as cocaine or heroin.
- **Avoid harmful workplace exposures.**
  - Ask questions about hazards in your workplace. You have a legal right to receive information on hazards in your workplace.
  - Learn how to [avoid bringing hazards home](#) on your skin, clothes, and shoes.

## Appendix 1: Social Media Toolkit

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### Birth Defects Prevention Month Social Media Toolkit

Join the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN) this January to promote National Birth Defects Prevention Month using your social media networks. Use this toolkit to raise awareness about #Prevent2Protect and join the conversation about preventing birth defects. In this appendix, we have provided suggestions for using various social media platforms to promote National Birth Defects Prevention Month, including example posts and more!



#### Facebook

- Like [National Birth Defects Prevention Network](#)'s page on Facebook. Like, share and comment.
- Tag [National Birth Defects Prevention Network](#) on your own posts.
- Share the Prevent to Protect badge (right), CDC social media buttons, or change your profile photo!
- For organizations or institutions, post this sample message to encourage your patients to raise awareness: How are you preventing infections to protect you and your baby? Share your tips with us! #Prevent2Protect
- Post some of the sample posts below:
  1. Properly preparing foods, talking to your healthcare provider, protecting yourself from animals and insects known to carry diseases, and maintaining good hygiene can decrease the chance of your baby being born with a birth defect. For more information visit: <http://www.nbdpn.org/bdpm2017.php> #Prevent2Protect
  2. January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month. Preventing infections during pregnancy by properly preparing food, talking to your healthcare provider, protecting yourself from animals and insects known to carry diseases, and maintaining good hygiene are all ways to decrease the chance of your baby being born with a birth defect. <http://www.nbdpn.org/bdpm2017.php> #Prevent2Protect

#### Twitter

- Follow [@NBDPN](#) and [@CDC\\_NCBDDD](#) on Twitter. Retweet, favorite, and comment.
- Use the #Prevent2Protect hashtag when sharing information, resources, photos or your own experiences.
- For organizations or institutions, post these sample messages to encourage your patients to raise awareness:
  - January is Nat'l Birth Defects Awareness Month! Tell us what you are doing to prevent infections during pregnancy. #Prevent2Protect.
  - This January, take action to prevent birth defects. What actions are you taking? #Prevent2Protect
- Share some of the sample tweets below:
  - January is Nat'l Birth Defects Prevention Month. Protect yourself from infections to protect you & your unborn baby from birth defects. Learn more: <http://go.usa.gov/gH8T>#Prevent2Protect
  - Taking precautionary steps to prevent infections—can help reduce the risk of birth defects. <http://go.usa.gov/g6jx> #Prevent2Protect

#### Instagram

- Follow [@CDC](#)
- Post photos of how you are preventing infections. Ideas include photos of pregnant woman kissing child on forehead, wearing long sleeves and pants outside, getting vaccines, talking to healthcare provider,

and washing hands after handling raw meat, changing a diaper, or wiping a runny nose. Incorporate the hashtag #Prevent2Protect.

- Share your own #Prevent2Protect story of how birth defects affect you. Tag photos with #Prevent2Protect.
- For organizations or institutions, encourage your patients to raise awareness by posting: Show us precautions you are taking to protect your baby from infections. #Prevent2Protect

### Examples of #Prevent2Protect Posts



Protecting myself from mosquitoes and ticks.  
#Prevent2Protect



I #Prevent2Protect by washing my hands after wiping my child's nose and changing diapers.



I #Prevent2Protect by talking to my healthcare provider on what I can do to prevent infections and making sure I am up to date on my vaccines.



I am up to date on all of my vaccines to protect my baby. #Prevent2Protect

### Sample Graphics

Share these graphics or replace your profile or cover photos with them. These samples and more are available on [nbdpn.org](http://nbdpn.org)

## Birth defects *affect us all.*



What *effect* will YOU have on birth defects?

## Appendix 2: Materials Adapted for Local Public Health Department

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This appendix contains some of the materials from the 2017 National Birth Defects Prevention Month packet that have been adapted for use in raising birth defects awareness with local public health agencies. These materials supplement a more [comprehensive packet](#) that includes a sample news release, proclamation, provider letters, resources on the internet, and parent resources.

### Local public health resource packet includes examples of:

- LPH1: Local public health announcement
- LPH2: Traditional letter to local public health agency administrators
- LPH3: Electronic letter to local public health agency staff
- LPH4: Brief awareness article
- LPH5: Awareness article for public health clinic newsletters
- LPH6: Announcement for electronic newsletters or listservs



## LPH1: Sample local public health announcement

### Plan ahead for January 2017 – Birth Defects Prevention Month!

The theme for 2017 is “Prevent to Protect: Prevent Infections for Baby’s Protection”. We encourage you to begin thinking about activities you can do in your agency or community to raise public awareness of the role infection before and during pregnancy plays in the development of birth defects.

The National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN) has developed a valuable packet of information. The materials raise awareness among health and public health professionals as well as the general public and include posters, sample communication tools and resource sheets. Some ideas for use of the packet to raise awareness include:

- Put posters up in your agency waiting rooms, even restrooms!
- Provide fact sheets and posters on the importance of using folic acid to prevent certain types of serious birth defects.
- Volunteer to present information on birth defects and birth defects prevention at a “lunch and learn” with your Maternal and Child Health (MCH) and Home Visiting Nurses and other agency staff.
- Supply pamphlets or fact sheets for patients and professionals in doctors’ offices and clinics in the community.

Electronic materials will be sent as soon as they are ready. Please contact (*insert contact information*) if you would like more information.



## LPH2: Sample traditional letter to local public health agency administrators

January 2017

### MEMORANDUM

TO: Administrators, County Health Departments  
District Nurse Managers (*Insert Other Recipients*)

FROM: (*Insert Name*)  
(*Department Director*)

About 120,000 babies are affected by birth defects each year in the United States. In (*name of state*), approximately (*insert number*) babies are born with a birth defect each year. Not only can birth defects lead to lifelong challenges and disability, they are also the most common cause of death in infants and the second most common cause of death in children aged one to four years. I have included a State of (*name of state*) Birth Defects Profile (*if appropriate - as well as a Regional Birth Defects Profile*) for your reference.

January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month. The theme for 2017 is “Prevent to Protect: Prevent Infections for Baby’s Protection”. We know that not all birth defects can be prevented. But, we also know that women can increase their chances of having a healthy baby by managing health conditions and adopting healthy behaviors before and during pregnancy. Some infections before and during pregnancy can hurt both you and your baby. They can cause birth defects and lifelong disabilities, such as hearing loss or learning problems. You can reduce your risk of getting an infection during pregnancy to help protect your baby by following the subsequent recommendations:

- **Properly prepare food.**
  - Wash your hands before and after preparing food.
  - Do not eat raw or runny eggs or raw sprouts.
  - Avoid unpasteurized (raw) milk and cheese, and other foods made from them.
- **Talk to your healthcare provider.**
  - Talk to your healthcare provider about what you can do to prevent infections such as Zika virus.
  - Make sure that you are up-to-date with vaccinations (shots) before getting pregnant.
  - Talk to your healthcare provider about vaccinations that you should receive during pregnancy.
- **Protect yourself from animals and insects known to carry diseases such as Zika virus.**
  - Stay away from wild or pet rodents, live poultry, lizards and turtles, and do not clean cat litter boxes while pregnant.
  - When mosquitoes and ticks are active, wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outside.
  - Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registered insect repellents with one of the following active ingredients: DEET, picaridin, IR3535, or oil of lemon eucalyptus (para-menthane-3,8-diol).
- **Maintain good hygiene.**
  - Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially
    - Before preparing or eating foods,
    - After handling raw meat, raw eggs, or unwashed vegetables,
    - After being around or touching pets and other animals,
    - After changing diapers or wiping runny noses.
  - Do not put a young child’s food, utensils, drinking cups, or pacifiers in your mouth.

You can make a difference in the lives of (*name of state*) families. Please review the materials in the attached packet and use them to raise public awareness of birth defects. We invite you to share these resources with coworkers, colleagues, staff, and others who might benefit from this information.

Thank you for your support. If you have any questions or would like additional materials, please contact me or (*Insert Name*) by phone at xxx-xxx-xxxx or by email (*Insert Email*) or (*Insert Email*).

## LPH3: Sample electronic letter to local public health agency staff

Dear (public health nurses/practitioners/clinic staff/etc.),

The (***name of state health department – hyperlinked to website***) is joining the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN) to raise awareness of birth defects and to promote strategies that reduce the risk of birth defects and their complications. The theme for 2017 is “Prevent to Protect: Prevent Infections for Baby’s Protection”. We hope that you will join us in promoting National Birth Defects Prevention Month and raising awareness of birth defects as a public health issue in your communities. Governor (name of Governor) has also proclaimed the month of January 2017 as Birth Defects Prevention Month (hyperlink to state proclamation). I invite you to share the attached resources with coworkers, colleagues, local public health staff, and others who might benefit from this information.

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 an 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. We know that not all birth defects can be prevented. But, we also know that women can increase their chances of having a healthy baby by managing health conditions and adopting healthy behaviors before becoming pregnant. Please encourage all pregnant women and those who may become pregnant to:

- **Properly prepare food.**
  - Wash your hands before and after preparing food.
  - Do not eat raw or runny eggs or raw sprouts.
  - Avoid unpasteurized (raw) milk and cheese, and other foods made from them.
- **Talk to your healthcare provider.**
  - Talk to your healthcare provider about what you can do to prevent infections such as Zika virus.
  - Make sure that you are up-to-date with vaccinations (shots) before getting pregnant.
  - Talk to your healthcare provider about vaccinations that you should receive during pregnancy.
- **Protect yourself from animals and insects known to carry diseases such as Zika virus.**
  - Stay away from wild or pet rodents, live poultry, lizards and turtles, and do not clean cat litter boxes while pregnant.
  - When mosquitoes and ticks are active, wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outside.
  - Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registered insect repellents with one of the following active ingredients: DEET, picaridin, IR3535, or oil of lemon eucalyptus (para-menthane-3,8-diol).
- **Maintain good hygiene.**
  - Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially
    - Before preparing or eating foods,
    - After handling raw meat, raw eggs, or unwashed vegetables,
    - After being around or touching pets and other animals,
    - After changing diapers or wiping runny noses.
  - Do not put a young child’s food, utensils, drinking cups, or pacifiers in your mouth.

The (*name of state – hyperlink to birth defects program website*) Birth Defects Program website contains information, resources, and links to free educational materials from (*name of state health department*), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN). We encourage you to use these materials to raise awareness of the ways birth defects can be prevented among health professionals and the general public in your community. You have the power to make a difference. We urge you to join us as an active participant in *National Birth Defects Prevention Month - 2017* and to continue your efforts throughout the year.

## LPH4: Sample awareness article (brief)

### January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month

#### Prevent to Protect – Prevent Infections for Baby's Protection

The (*name of state/local*) Department of Health is joining the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN) and the (*name of state*) March of Dimes to raise awareness of birth defects and to promote strategies that reduce the risk of birth defects and their complications. Join us in promoting National Birth Defects Prevention Month!

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 an increased risk for developing many lifelong physical, cognitive, and social challenges.

Although not all birth defects can be prevented, all women who could become pregnant or are pregnant can lower their risk of having babies with birth defects by following some basic health guidelines throughout their reproductive years. These include:

- **Properly prepare food.**
  - Wash your hands before and after preparing food.
  - Do not eat raw or runny eggs or raw sprouts.
  - Avoid unpasteurized (raw) milk and cheese, and other foods made from them.
- **Talk to your healthcare provider.**
  - Talk to your healthcare provider about what you can do to prevent infections such as Zika virus.
  - Make sure that you are up-to-date with vaccinations (shots) before getting pregnant.
  - Talk to your healthcare provider about vaccinations that you should receive during pregnancy.
- **Protect yourself from animals and insects known to carry diseases such as Zika virus.**
  - Stay away from wild or pet rodents, live poultry, lizards and turtles, and do not clean cat litter boxes while pregnant.
  - When mosquitoes and ticks are active, wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outside.
  - Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registered insect repellents with one of the following active ingredients: DEET, picaridin, IR3535, or oil of lemon eucalyptus (para-menthane-3,8-diol).
- **Maintain good hygiene.**
  - Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially
    - Before preparing or eating foods,
    - After handling raw meat, raw eggs, or unwashed vegetables,
    - After being around or touching pets and other animals,
    - After changing diapers or wiping runny noses.
  - Do not put a young child's food, utensils, drinking cups, or pacifiers in your mouth.

January is a perfect time to call additional attention to the importance of folic acid in preventing certain birth defects. The United States Public Health Service recommends that all women of childbearing age consume 400 micrograms (400mcg or .4mg) of folic acid daily to prevent up to 50 - 70% of neural tube defects, such as spina bifida and anencephaly.

The (*name of state Birth Defects Program*) has resource materials available on their website to assist you in raising awareness of birth defects as a public health issue in your clinic and communities. Materials include the NBDPN resource packet that can be tailored to meet your specific needs, sample partner and provider letters, a proclamation of the month, as well as links to resources for parents and other interested in learning more about birth defects.

For more information, contact (*insert name and email*)

## LPH5: Sample awareness article for public health clinic newsletters

### January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month

The (*name of state*) Department of Health is joining the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN) to raise awareness of birth defects and to promote strategies that can reduce the risk of birth defects and their complications. This year's theme is "Prevent to Protect: Prevent Infections for Baby's Protection". Although not all birth defects can be prevented, the healthcare community can help all women, including teens, who could become pregnant or are pregnant to lower their risk of having babies with birth defects by encouraging them to follow some basic health guidelines throughout their reproductive years:

- **Properly prepare food.**
  - Wash your hands before and after preparing food.
  - Do not eat raw or runny eggs or raw sprouts.
  - Avoid unpasteurized (raw) milk and cheese, and other foods made from them.
- **Talk to your healthcare provider.**
  - Talk to your healthcare provider about what you can do to prevent infections such as Zika virus.
  - Make sure that you are up-to-date with vaccinations (shots) before getting pregnant.
  - Talk to your healthcare provider about vaccinations that you should receive during pregnancy.
- **Protect yourself from animals and insects known to carry diseases such as Zika virus.**
  - Stay away from wild or pet rodents, live poultry, lizards and turtles, and do not clean cat litter boxes while pregnant.
  - When mosquitoes and ticks are active, wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outside.
  - Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registered insect repellents with one of the following active ingredients: DEET, picaridin, IR3535, or oil of lemon eucalyptus (para-menthane-3,8-diol).
- **Maintain good hygiene.**
  - Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially
    - Before preparing or eating foods,
    - After handling raw meat, raw eggs, or unwashed vegetables,
    - After being around or touching pets and other animals,
    - After changing diapers or wiping runny noses.
  - Do not put a young child's food, utensils, drinking cups, or pacifiers in your mouth.

January is a perfect time to call additional attention to the importance of folic acid in preventing certain birth defects. The United States Public Health Service recommends that all women of childbearing age consume 400 micrograms (400mcg or .4mg) of folic acid daily to prevent up to 50 - 70% of neural tube defects, such as spina bifida and anencephaly.

You can make a difference in the lives of (*name of state*) families. Additional resources can be found on the NBDPN website. If you have questions or would like more information, please contact (*name and email*).

## LPH6: Sample announcement for electronic newsletters or listservs

### January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month and January 8-14 is Folic Acid Awareness Week

The (*name of state*) Department of Health is joining the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN) to raise awareness of birth defects and to promote strategies that reduce the risk of birth defects and their complications. We hope that you will join us in promoting National Birth Defects Prevention Month! This year's theme is "Prevent to Protect: Prevent Infections for Baby's Protection". We know that not all birth defects can be prevented. However, we encourage all women to make healthy choices and adopt healthy habits to help lower their risk of having a baby born with a birth defect. Please encourage all pregnant women and those who may become pregnant to follow the recommended guidelines to reduce their chance of developing an infection before or during their pregnancy.

The (*name of state and birth defects program - hyperlink to birth defects program website*) has resource materials available on their website to assist you in raising awareness of birth defects as a public health issue in your clinic and communities. Materials include the NBDPN resource packet and (*name of state*) resource packet that can be tailored to meet your specific needs. These materials contain sample partner and provider letters, a proclamation of the month, as well as links to resources for parents and other interested in learning more about birth defects and infections during pregnancy. Free educational materials are also available on the CDC website at [www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefects/freematerials.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefects/freematerials.html).

Folic Acid Awareness Week, January 8-14, is a perfect time to call additional attention to the importance of folic acid in preventing certain birth defects. The United States Public Health Service recommends that *all* women of childbearing age consume 400 micrograms (400mcg or .4mg) of folic acid daily to prevent up to 50 - 70% of neural tube defects, such as spina bifida and anencephaly. To learn more about Folic Acid Awareness Week go to <http://www.nbdpn.org/faaw.php>.

For more information, contact (*name and email*).

**To access our resources online visit [www.nbdpn.org](http://www.nbdpn.org)**