



JANUARY IS NATIONAL BIRTH DEFECTS AWARENESS MONTH

The National Birth Defects Prevention Network is working to raise awareness of the prevalence of birth defects and strategies that reduce the risk of birth defects and their complications. This year's theme is "Making Healthy Choices to Prevent Birth Defects: Make a **PACT** for Prevention." Although not all birth defects can be prevented, the healthcare community can help all women (including teens) who could become pregnant or are pregnant lower their risk of having a baby with a birth defect by encouraging them to follow some basic health guidelines throughout their reproductive years, including:

Plan ahead:

- Get as healthy as you can before you get pregnant
- Get 400 micrograms of folic acid every day

Avoid harmful substances:

- Avoid drinking alcohol and smoking
- Be careful with harmful exposures at work and home

Choose a healthy lifestyle:

- Eat a healthy diet that includes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low fat dairy, lean proteins, and healthy fats and oils
- Be physically active
- Work to get medical conditions like diabetes under control

Talk to your doctor:

- Get a medical check up
- Discuss all medications, both prescriptions and over-the-counter
- Talk about your family history

The United States Public health Service recommends that all women of childbearing age consume 400 micrograms of folic acid per day to prevent up to 50-70 percent of neural tube defects, such as spina bifida and anencephaly.

Information courtesy of NBDPN website, www.nbdpn.org