

January



National Health Observances



Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

National Birth Defects Prevention Month

Sponsor: The National Birth Defects Prevention Network (<http://www.nbdpn.org>) 

National Birth Defects Prevention Month is a time to raise awareness of birth defects and promote healthy pregnancies.

A birth defect is a problem that happens while a baby is developing in the mother's body. One out of every 33 babies in the United States is born with a birth defect.

Many birth defects can be prevented. If you are pregnant or planning to get pregnant, these tips can help you have a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby:

- Take a multivitamin with folic acid every day before and during pregnancy.
- See your doctor or midwife regularly as soon as you think you're pregnant and throughout your pregnancy.
- Make sure your vaccinations are up to date.
- Eat well and stay active.
- Avoid alcohol, smoking, and other drug use.
- Prevent infections from food and other sources.

Get the Word Out

Sample Media and/or Newsletter or Listserv Announcement

Cut and paste this text into your newsletter, listserv, or press release. Add local details and quotes from your organization.

Approximately one in every 33 babies is born with a birth defect each year in the United States. This is why **[your organization]** is proudly participating in National Birth Defects Prevention Month. Locally, **[fill in statistics]** are affected by birth defects.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines a birth defect as a problem that happens while the baby is developing in the mother's body. Babies born with birth defects have a greater chance of illness and long-term disability. Diabetes is the theme of this year's National Birth Defects Prevention Month (January).

- Add details about your local activities.
- Include quote from your organization.

Both genetic and environmental factors can cause birth defects. While 60 to 70 percent of birth defects are unknown, there are some simple steps a woman can take to lower her risk of having a baby with a birth defect. These include:





- Getting enough folic acid every day before and during pregnancy.
- Not smoking, using recreational drugs, or drinking alcohol while pregnant.
- Preventing infection.
- Avoiding certain medications (and other chemicals).
- Getting regular prenatal care.
- Eating properly.
- Making sure all vaccinations are up to date.






For more information, visit **[insert your organization information]**.

Is your organization on Twitter? Send tweets.

Sample tweets: Tips to a Safe Pregnancy and a Healthy Baby

The messages below are sample tweets. To send them via Twitter, click on the URL link provided after the “Tweet this message” phrase. Or, copy the message and paste it to your Twitter Stream and click post.

- Prevention and wellness resources and tools for your pregnancy:
<http://1.usa.gov/jtetEd> [Tweet this message:
<http://twitter.com/share?url=http://1.usa.gov/jtetEd&text=Prevention+and+wellnes+s+resources+and+tools+for+your+pregnancy.> 
- Ask your doctor if you should be taking a daily prenatal vitamin. [Tweet this message:
<http://twitter.com/share?url=http://1.usa.gov/IYpE5n&text=Ask+your+doctor+if+yo+u+should+be+taking+a+daily+prenatal+vitamin.> 
- Did you know? Women in every state can get help to pay for medical care during pregnancy: <http://1.usa.gov/lmCXli>. [Tweet this message:
<http://twitter.com/share?url=http://1.usa.gov/lmCXli&text=Did+you+know?+Wome+n+in+every+state+can+get+help+to+pay+for+medical+care+during+pregnancy.> 
]
- Print-and-Go-Guide: Simple Do’s and Don’ts When You’re Pregnant from @womenshealth: <http://1.usa.gov/jneTYi>. [Tweet this message:
<http://twitter.com/share?url=http://1.usa.gov/jneTYi&text=Print-and-Go-Guide:+Simple+Do's+and+Don'ts+When+You're+Pregnant+from+@womenshealt+h:> 

- It's good and reassuring to know the facts. Information about potential pregnancy complications: <http://1.usa.gov/kezW1F>. [Tweet this message: <http://twitter.com/share?url=http://1.usa.gov/kezW1F&text=Its+good+and+reassuring+to+know+the+facts.+Information+about+potential+pregnancy+complications:> 
- Wash your hands, prepare food safely & avoid certain foods while pregnant to help prevent infection. Learn more: <http://1.usa.gov/kIAIaU>. [Tweet this message: <http://twitter.com/share?url=http://1.usa.gov/kIAIaU&text=Wash+your+hands,+prepare+food+safely+and+avoid+certain+foods+while+pregnant+to+help+prevent+infection.+Learn+more:> 
- Today, tell a friend how important it is to take folic acid, especially if she might become pregnant one day. [Tweet this message: <http://twitter.com/share?text=Today,+tell+a+friend+how+important+it+is+to+take+folic+acid,+especially+if+she+might+become+pregnant+one+day.> 
- Learn the ABC's to a healthy pregnancy from @CDC_ehealth: <http://1.usa.gov/mvYUga>. [Tweet this message: http://twitter.com/share?url=http://1.usa.gov/mvYUga&text=Learn+the+ABCs+to+a+healthy+pregnancy+from+@CDC_ehealth: 
- Did you know? Smoking is not good for you or your baby. Even being around cigarette smoke puts a woman and her baby at risk. [Tweet this message: <http://twitter.com/share?text=Did+you+know?+Smoking+is+not+good+for+you+or+your+baby.+Even+being+around+cigarette+smoke+puts+a+woman+and+her+baby+at+risk.> 

Send e-cards

- healthfinder.gov: Have a Healthy Pregnancy (<http://www.healthfinder.gov/ecards/DisplayCard.aspx?CardID=33>)
- CDC: Folic Acid (<http://www2c.cdc.gov/eCards/message/message.asp?cardid=255>)
- CDC: Getting Ready (<http://www2c.cdc.gov/ecards/message/message.asp?cardid=88&category=195>)
- View more E-cards (<http://www.healthfinder.gov/ecards/cards.aspx>)

Post a Web Badge


Add this free Web badge (<http://www.healthfinder.gov/nho/nhoBadges.aspx#jan>) to your Web site, blog, or social networking profile to show your support for National Birth Defects Prevention Month.

Get Involved

Take action to promote healthy pregnancies.

1. Post an announcement and information on your organization's Web site or through your listserv. (See sample announcement: <http://healthfinder.gov/nho/janAnnounce.aspx>)
2. Connect with supportive partners in the media. Prepare public service announcement (PSA) scripts and write educational articles that may be used or adapted by local media. Recruit a local "birth defects prevention champion" for media interviews.
3. Contact the communications lead for your agency. Ask that Birth Defects Prevention Month and related information be announced in your organization newsletter, all-staff emails, or included as a stuffer in payroll envelopes.
4. Contact state or local businesses. Companies may add information about 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.
5. Work with local libraries, stores, churches, community centers and community colleges, and universities to distribute information and/or materials.

Adapted from the National Birth Defects Prevention Network.

Contact the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (<http://www.nbdpn.org/>)  at nbdpn@nbdpn.org for more information and materials.

Related Tools on healthfinder.gov

- Have a Healthy Pregnancy (<http://healthfinder.gov/prevention/ViewTopic.aspx?topicId=48>)
- Get Enough Folic Acid (<http://healthfinder.gov/prevention/ViewTopic.aspx?topicId=19>)
- Talk with Your Doctor About Newborn Screening (<http://healthfinder.gov/prevention/ViewTopic.aspx?topicId=57>)
- Get Adult Booster Shots (<http://healthfinder.gov/prevention/ViewTopic.aspx?topicId=58>)
- Eat Healthy during Pregnancy: Quick Tips (<http://healthfinder.gov/prevention/ViewTool.aspx?toolId=48&catId=3>)
- Stay Active during Pregnancy: Quick Tips (<http://healthfinder.gov/prevention/ViewTool.aspx?toolId=29&catId=3>)


Personal Health Tools


- Pregnancy Quiz (<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/ecdh/Health/Health%20and%20Wellness/Health%20and%20Wellness%20Families/PregnancyQuiz.htm>)
- MyPlate Plan for Moms (<http://www.choosemyplate.gov/supertracker-tools/daily-food-plans/moms.html>)

More Information (Health A-Z)

- Birth Defects (<http://healthfinder.gov/scripts/SearchContext.asp?topic=107>)
- Prenatal Care (<http://healthfinder.gov/scripts/SearchContext.asp?topic=693>)

Resources

- The National Birth Defects Prevention Network (<http://www.nbdpn.org/>) 
National Birth Defects Prevention Month Sponsor
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities (<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/bd/default.htm>)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention & Health Promotion: Maternal and Infant Health (<http://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/MaternalInfantHealth/index.htm>)

- Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health, Prenatal Tests (<http://www.womenshealth.gov/pregnancy/you-are-pregnant/prenatal-care-tests.cfm#c>)
- Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau, A Healthy Start: Begin Before Baby's Born (<http://www.womenshealth.gov/pregnancy/you-are-pregnant/prenatal-care-tests.cfm#c>)
- March of Dimes, Birth Defects (<http://www.marchofdimes.com/Baby/birthdefects.html>) 
- National Institutes of Health, Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Birth Defects (http://nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/birth_defects.cfm)

Tips to Plan a National Health Observance

Each National Health Observance (NHO) presents an opportunity to educate the public, energize co-workers and community members, and promote healthy behaviors. The NHO toolkits (<http://www.healthfinder.gov/nho>) have the information and tools you need to get started.

Use the tips in this guide to plan a successful health promotion event.

Planning:

Planning is critical to the success of any outreach effort. Contact the NHO sponsoring organization several months ahead of time to request up-to-date information and materials. (Contact information for each month's sponsoring organization is provided in each toolkit).

- Consider enlisting the help of a community partner to help you plan and promote your event.
- Meet with those who will be valuable in your event coordination. To get started, sit down with potential partners, such as local businesses, local government agencies, key leaders, organizations, and media partners who share an interest in the NHO.
- Recruit volunteers, speakers, and community liaisons.
- Develop new or adapt existing materials to distribute at the event.
- Be sure to get them printed and/or copied in advance.
- Conduct a run-through before the event.

Promoting:

Develop a publicity and media outreach plan. Designate a media contact from your planning team and make sure they are available to answer questions and follow up on media requests.

- Start by creating a local media list.
- Use local access television, radio, newspaper, and community calendars to promote your event.
- Post event announcements on your Web site. Encourage your partners to post similar announcements on their Web sites.
- Send a press release.
- Engage the media by offering a spokesperson from your organization or the community.
- Post flyers or posters throughout the community: on bulletin boards at local community centers, places of worship, the library, post office, local schools, recreation centers, clinics, pharmacies, stores, and businesses.
- Send flyers to each participating organization for distribution.

On the Day of the Event:

- Set up tables, chairs, and a check-in table prior to your event.
- Make plenty of sign-in sheets. Create a separate sign-in sheet for members of the media.
- Don't forget the refreshments!
- Make signs to direct participants and reporters to your event.

Tracking Media Coverage:


If you are distributing information to the media, plan ahead of time to track your coverage. There are both paid and free resources to track media coverage.

Free media tracking resources search for news articles based on your specific search term(s) and a date range. Some tracking services will send automatic e-mail alerts to notify you when your event and/or keywords are mentioned.

Paid media tracking typically captures a wider range of media stories (both print and online) than free Internet search tools. Paid media tracking sources search within certain locations, news outlet types, and/or specific dates. Some paid media tracking tools offer e-mail alerts and the ability to search archived Web and print news; they also allow users to tailor searches to obtain the most relevant media stories. Other paid

media services monitor all forms of social media, including blogs, top video and image-sharing sites, forums, opinion sites, mainstream online media, and Twitter.

Be sure to share media coverage with your community partners, stakeholders, and all those who helped you plan and promote your event. Post a summary of media coverage on your organization's Web site. No matter the size or success of your event, remember that your efforts are key to educating the public about important health issues.

Last but not least, share your feedback and results with us here at healthfinder.gov. You can contact us at info@nhic.org or send us a tweet @healthfinder (<http://twitter.com/healthfinder>) .