



## NATIONAL BIRTH DEFECT PREVENTION MONTH 2020

December 30, 2019- Did you know, every 4 ½ minutes a baby is born with a birth defect in the United States?

That's why during National Birth Defect Prevention Month in January, District Health Department #10 (DHD#10) is joining with leading prenatal health experts to increase public awareness of five critical tips to reduce the chances of birth defects in babies.

"This year's National Birth Defect Prevention Month campaign, *Best for You. Best for Baby*, aims to raise awareness of the 1 in 33 babies who are born with birth defects in the United States each year," said Anne Bianchi, MS, RD, Director of District Health Department #10's Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) program.

While all birth defects can't be prevented, a woman can take the following steps to increase her own chances for a healthy baby:

1. **Take 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid every day.**
  - Folic acid is a vitamin that can be taken prior to becoming pregnant as well as during pregnancy.
  - It is very important to take while pregnant because it can help prevent some major birth defects of the baby's brain and spine.
2. **Book a visit with your healthcare provider before stopping or starting any medication.**
  - There are often benefits to continuing treatment throughout pregnancy. Discussing a treatment plan before a pregnancy allows a woman and her health care provider to weigh the pros and cons of all options to keep mom and baby as healthy as possible.
3. **Become up-to-date with all vaccines, including the flu shot.**
  - Having the right vaccinations, like the flu and Tdap vaccines, at the right time during pregnancy can help keep a woman and her baby healthy.
4. **Before you get pregnant, try to reach a healthy weight.**
  - Obesity increases the risk for several serious birth defects and other pregnancy complications.
5. **Boost your health by avoiding harmful substances during pregnancy, such as alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other drugs.**
  - There is no known safe amount of alcohol during pregnancy and its exposure can cause major birth defects.
  - Smoking tobacco and/or marijuana during pregnancy can cause dangerous chemicals to damage the placenta and/or reach baby's bloodstream.
  - The opioid addiction epidemic has led to a sharp increase in Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS), premature birth and drug withdrawal in developing babies.



### MEDIA CONTACT

Jeannine Taylor  
Public Information Officer  
O: 231-876-3823  
C: 231-920-4998  
E: jtaylor@dhd10.org



### COUNTIES SERVED:

Crawford  
Kalkaska  
Lake  
Manistee  
Mason  
Mecosta  
Missaukee  
Newaygo  
Oceana  
Wexford



[www.dhd10.org](http://www.dhd10.org)



[www.facebook.com/DHD10](https://www.facebook.com/DHD10)

### About DHD #10

District Health Department #10 (DHD #10) is Michigan's largest geographical health department, mandated to promote and protect the public from unsafe and hazardous conditions and provide methods of promoting good health and disease prevention. Some of the vital programs provided by DHD #10 include Immunizations, Infectious

Disease Control, STI Testing and Counseling, WIC, Maternal Infant Health Program, Healthy Families of Northern Michigan, Children's Special Health Services, Hearing and Vision Screening, Family Planning, Cancer Screening, Worksite Wellness, Smoking Cessation, Substance Use Prevention, Chronic Disease Prevention, and Environmental Health Services. DHD #10 serves Crawford, Kalkaska, Lake, Manistee, Mason, Mecosta, Missaukee, Newaygo, Oceana, and Wexford counties. For more information, visit [www.dhd10.org](http://www.dhd10.org).

###