

January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month!

Not all birth defects can be prevented. But a woman can increase her own chance of having a healthy baby. Many birth defects happen very early in pregnancy, sometimes before a woman even knows she is pregnant. Remember that about half of all pregnancies are unplanned. Here are some steps a woman can take to get ready for a healthy pregnancy:

- Take a vitamin with 400 micrograms (mcg) folic acid every day.
- Avoid alcohol, tobacco, and street drugs.
- Keep hands clean while washing them often with soap and water to prevent infections.
- See a health care professional regularly.
- Talk with the health care professional about any medical problems and medicine use (both prescription and over the counter).
- Ask about avoiding any substances at work or at home that might be harmful to the developing baby.
- Eat a healthy, balanced diet.
- Avoid unpasteurized (raw) milk and foods made from it.
- Avoid eating raw or undercooked meat.

While pregnant:

- Keep up these healthy habits
- **Get early prenatal care (within the first 12 weeks) and keep every appointment.**

Ask your health care professional or local health department how to plan for a healthy pregnancy and baby.

For more information please visit: http://www.nbdpn.org/national_birth_defects_prevent.php