

JANUARY 11, 2023

MCHD HEALTH BLOG

The greatest wealth of a community is the health of the people.



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.
MORGAN COUNTY HEALTH DEPT.



BIRTH DEFECTS PREVENTION MONTH

Birth defects are structural changes that can affect almost any part of the baby's body, such as the heart, brain, or foot. Not all birth defects can be prevented, but we know that women can increase their chances of having a healthy baby by adopting healthy behaviors and lifestyles. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends you make a PACT for get healthy before and during pregnancy!

Making a PACT stands for:

- Plan ahead. Get 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid every day, or per physician recommendations. Folic acid helps prevent major birth defects of the baby's brain and spine. Also, try to see a doctor regularly even if you're not pregnant yet to make a plan to get healthy and ask questions.
- Avoid harmful substances. Alcohol, cigarettes, and even marijuana may put your developing baby at risk. Avoid these things altogether to help protect your baby against birth defects.
- Choose a healthy lifestyle. Eat a healthy diet that includes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins (like chicken or turkey), and low-fat dairy. If you have any medical conditions, such as diabetes, talk to your doctor about how to best keep them under control. Work to maintain a healthy weight, since obesity can cause complications during pregnancy.
- Talk with your healthcare provider. Discuss all medications (including over-the-counter ones and supplements) you are taking and how they may affect you and your pregnancy. You'll also want to talk about which vaccines are recommended for you to get during pregnancy. Some vaccines protect women against infections that can cause birth defects. Having the right vaccines can help keep you and you baby healthy.

Not all birth defects can be prevented. However, we encourage all pregnant people and prospective parents to make healthy choices. When you adopt healthier habits, you help lower the risk of having a baby born with a birth defect. There is hope for a healthier future. To learn more, visit www.cdc.gov/birthdefects.