What is the Good News?

The good news is there are ways to prevent and treat some birth defects. Progress in research brings hope for new treatments and cures each day. Babies with birth defects are living longer and healthier lives. This is thanks to newborn screening, early diagnosis, special care and new medical treatments.

Parents can learn more about rare conditions, risks and testing from genetic counseling.

Dads are important. A man's health and family history affect his children's development.

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) monitors birth defects that occur in the state. The Birth Defects Registry Education and Outreach Program can tell you about services for children with birth defects. This program may help you or someone you know.

Want to Know More?

Ask your health care provider or local health department about planning for a healthy baby.

March of Dimes Pregnancy & Newborn Health Education Center
Call: 248-359-1550
Visit: www.marchofdimes.org
E-mail: mi630@marchofdimes.org

Michigan Birth Defects Outreach and Education Program
Call: 1-866-852-1247 (toll free)
Visit: www.migrc.org
E-mail: BDRFollowup@michigan.gov

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC)
Call: 1-800-CDC-INFO (toll-free)
(1-800-232-4636)
Visit: www.cdc.gov/ncbddd
E-mail: cdcinfo@cdc.gov

MothertoBaby
Call: 1-866-626-6847
Visit: www.mothertobaby.org
For information on infection, drug, and other exposures during pregnancy

Michigan Health and Wellness
Visit: http://michigan.gov/healthymichigan
For healthy lifestyle suggestions

MDHHS
Michigan Department of Health & Human Services
RICK SNYDER, GOVERNOR | NICK LYON, DIRECTOR

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HAVING A HEALTHY BABY

What every Michigan family needs to know.

Did You Know?

Preconception health is a woman's health before becoming pregnant. It is very important for a woman to be as healthy as possible before conception. Some birth defects can be prevented. But many birth defects happen very early in pregnancy, before you know you are pregnant. Healthy lifestyles, like not smoking and eating a variety of foods with plenty of grain products, vegetables and fruits, are best for every woman.

Every woman can increase her odds of having a healthy baby.

What is a Birth Defect?

A birth defect is an abnormal condition that occurs before or at the time of birth. Birth defects can happen in any family. They can cause physical, learning and behavior problems. Children with a birth defect may need special medical care or therapy.

Every 4 ½ minutes a baby is born with a birth defect. Some birth defects are caused by certain drugs or chemicals. They can also be caused by infections or chronic illness in the mother. Genetics has a part in the cause of many birth defects. The exact cause of many birth defects is still a mystery.

Make a PACT for Prevention

PLAN AHEAD

- Take one multivitamin each day that lists 400 mcg or (0.4 mg) of folic acid or folate on the label. It helps prevent some kinds of birth defects.
- Get as healthy as you can before pregnancy. Get to a healthy weight before pregnancy. Stay physically active.

AVOID HARMFUL SUBSTANCES

- Avoid drinking alcohol and smoking.
- Be careful with harmful exposures at work and home.
- Avoid using hot tubs and saunas when pregnant or planning pregnancy.
- Avoid harmful household substances such as insecticides, lead, mercury and strong chemicals. Learn if there are chemicals to avoid at work that might harm an unborn baby.
- Ask others to handle soiled cat litter. Avoid pet mice, rats, hamsters, guinea pigs. They may spread infections that can harm unborn babies.

CHOOSE A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

- Eat a healthy diet that includes fruit, vegetables, whole grains, low fat dairy, and lean proteins.
- Eat fully cooked meat. Avoid mercury and other chemicals in fish. Follow Michigan's Eat Safe Fish guidelines. Go to www.michigan.gov/eatsafefish or call 1-800-648-6942 to get a free *Eat Safe Fish Guide*.
- Wash hands often to reduce the spread of infection.

TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR

- Get medical and dental check-ups.
- Find out if needed medicines (both over-the-counter and prescription) are safe during pregnancy.
- Share your family history of birth defects or developmental disabilities and learn your partner's history.
- Talk to your health care provider about:
  - ✓ The use of supplements, vitamins or herbal remedies and health products.
  - ✓ Immunizations (booster shots) to protect against infections like Rubella (German measles). These can harm an unborn baby.
  - ✓ Health problems like diabetes, seizures, PKU, or other chronic conditions and planning for pregnancy. Then choose a health care team and hospital that have experience with high-risk pregnancies.
- Practice safe sex by using condoms to protect against sexually transmitted diseases (STD).

All women are encouraged to make a PACT for their own health and the family they may have one day.