



Best for You, Best for Baby

By Vanessa Mack – WIC Coordinator

The Minnesota Department of Health is partnering with the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN) to raise awareness and to promote strategies that can reduce risk and complications associated with birth defects.

The theme is “**Best for You. Best for Baby.**” Although not all birth defects can be prevented, there are things women can do when planning for a pregnancy to lower their risk. The following recommendations can make a difference for the health of mom and the health of the baby:

- **Be sure to take 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid every day** - Folic acid is very important because it can help prevent some major birth defects of the baby’s brain and spine.
- **Talk with your healthcare provider before stopping or starting any medicine.** - There are often benefits to continuing medication 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.
- **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.
- **Before you get pregnant, try to reach a healthy weight** - Obesity increases the risk for several serious birth defects and other pregnancy complications.
- **Boost your health by avoiding harmful substances during pregnancy, such as alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.** -There is no known safe amount of alcohol during pregnancy and its exposure can cause major birth defects. Smoking 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.

Additional resources can be found on the NBDPN website: <https://www.nbdpn.org/>.

A healthy diet during pregnancy can also improve the health of the baby. Brown County Public Health offers a program called WIC – Women and Infant Nutrition Program. For women that qualify it provides nutrition education and assistance to purchase nutritional food for pregnant women and children up to age 5.

If you are pregnant or have an infant or child less than five years of age and think you may qualify contact us at Brown County WIC, 507-233-6800 for more information or to enroll. For additional information about the WIC program, visit <https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/>.