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FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER AWARENESS DAY HIGHLIGHTS NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF DRINKING WHILE PREGNANT



Contact:

Communications Office

NewsMedia@flhealth.gov

850-245-4111

Tallahassee, Fla. — The Florida Department of Health recognizes Sept. 9, 2015, as International Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) Awareness Day. FASDs are a group of conditions that can occur in a person whose mother drank alcohol during pregnancy. These conditions can affect each person differently and can include physical, behavioral or learning problems.

“It is important for any potential mother to be mindful of healthy choices before trying to become pregnant,” said State Surgeon General and Secretary of Health Dr. John Armstrong. “Provide your baby with the best chance for a healthy life by discontinuing alcohol and tobacco products, eating nutritious foods and getting regular check-ups with a health care professional.”

There is no safe amount, or type, of alcohol to consume during pregnancy, and any woman is at risk of having a child with an FASD if she drinks alcohol during pregnancy. Alcohol consumption can affect the baby even before the mother realizes she is pregnant, and unplanned pregnancies pose one of the greatest challenges to preventing these conditions.

Women who are pregnant or planning a pregnancy should make sure they talk with their health care provider about strategies for avoiding alcohol consumption during pregnancy. Women can take a number of steps to keep themselves and their babies healthy during pregnancy including scheduling regular prenatal visits with a health care professional, maintaining a healthy weight and exercising regularly.

There are no cures for FASDs, but research shows early intervention treatment services can improve a child’s development. The department offers several preventative health services to both men and women in all of Florida’s 67 counties. This includes programs such as Healthy Start, which helps pregnant women; women during their reproductive years, between pregnancies and six weeks after delivery; and infants and children up to age three obtain the health care and social support needed to reduce the risks for poor maternal and child health. Healthy Start also offers prenatal and infant risk screening, which may help detect FASD.

Other programs, including the Florida Center for Early Childhood, offer screening and diagnostic services for families in need. They can be reached at 800- 587-1385 or via the web at www.thefloridacenter.org/FASD.php.

About the Florida Department of Health

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