

Jan. 6, 2016

MAKE A 'PACT' TO HAVE A HEALTHY PREGNANCY



Contact:

Communications Office

NewsMedia@flhealth.gov

850-245-4111

Tallahassee, Fla.—The Florida Department of Health is raising awareness about the important steps families can take to improve the health of babies and decrease the impact of birth defects. During National Birth Defects Prevention Month and National Folic Acid Awareness Week, the department is encouraging women who are pregnant or planning a pregnancy to make a “**PACT**” with their health care provider to have a healthy pregnancy.

“We want every baby to be healthy,” said State Surgeon General and Secretary of Health Dr. John Armstrong. “Keeping moms healthy – before and during pregnancy – is important for preventing serious birth defects.”

Of the more than 220,000 babies born in Florida each year, **1 in 33** may be diagnosed with a major birth defect before their first birthday. Although not all birth defects can be prevented, steps can be taken to increase a woman’s chance of having a healthy baby. The department encourages all pregnant women and those who may become pregnant to make a “**PACT**”:

- **Plan ahead**
 - Before becoming pregnant, discuss your family medical history with your health care provider.
 - Work to achieve a healthy weight and control medical conditions before becoming pregnant.
 - Consume 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid, a vitamin that can help prevent birth defects, every day to help prevent certain birth defects.
- **Avoid harmful substances**
 - Avoid drinking alcohol and using tobacco products.
 - Be careful with harmful exposures at work and home.
- **Choose a healthy lifestyle**
 - Eat a healthy diet that includes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy and lean proteins.
 - If possible, be physically active daily.
- **Talk to your doctor**
 - Seek prenatal care as soon as you think you may be pregnant.
 - Discuss all medications, both prescription and over-the-counter, with your provider.

The Florida Birth Defects Registry, the department's statewide population-based surveillance system, monitors the numbers and types of birth defects that are occurring so appropriate prevention, intervention, education, and referral programs are available to assist affected individuals, families and their health care providers.

For more information about the prevention of birth defects in Florida, please visit www.fbdr.org. The department also partners with the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN) and the 2016 NBDPN Birth Defects Prevention information packet is available online at: <http://www.nbdpn.org/bdpm2016.php>.

About the Florida Department of Health

The department works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

Follow us on Twitter at [@HealthyFla](https://twitter.com/HealthyFla) and on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/HealthyFla). For more information about the Florida Department of Health please visit www.FloridaHealth.gov.