



## Birth Defect Awareness Month

### Did You Know...

About 1 in 20 women (5%) take street drugs during pregnancy.

1 in 33 babies born are affected by birth defects. That's around 120,000 babies born each year affected by birth defects.

Most birth defects develop during the first 3 months of pregnancy.

Lower socioeconomic areas have a higher rate of birth defects.

Babies born to cigarette smoking mothers are 9-10oz lighter and twice as likely to be of low birth weight.



Many birth defects can happen very early during pregnancy, sometimes before a woman knows she is pregnant. While not all birth defects can be prevented, there are ways to help minimize the risks. Below are a number of things to consider before and during pregnancy.

Alcohol and illicit drug consumption during pregnancy can cause learning deficiencies, developmental delays, heart defects, behavioral issues, and slower growth. Some prescription and OTC medications may not be safe to take during pregnancy so be sure to consult your doctor if you are using any.

Higher levels of mercury can be found in shark, swordfish, king mackerel, tuna varieties and tilefish. These should be avoided completely during pregnancy. Albacore and tuna steaks contain 3 times more mercury than 'light'/canned tuna. Look for 'light' tuna, salmon and other fish low in mercury and limit consumption to 12 oz. a week.

Toxoplasmosis is an infection, caused by a parasite, in cat feces; and can be transferred to a pregnant mother through litter box change outs and gardening. This can cause learning, hearing, and visual disabilities in the unborn child.

## What You Can Do:

- Get plenty of Folic Acid
- Avoid alcohol and illicit drugs
- Avoid smoking
- Prevent infections by regular hand washing
- Talk to a health care provider about any medications you are currently taking
- Talk to a health care provider about recommended vaccines
- Reach and maintain a healthy weight
- Prevent gestational diabetes
- Make regular visits to a doctor/midwife
- Limit seafood intake
- Avoid harmful chemicals

## For More Information On:

Illicit Drugs and Pregnancy

[March of Dimes](#)

Healthy Diets During Pregnancy

[Baby Center](#)

[WebMD](#)

Pets and Pregnancy

[WebMD](#)

Toxic Chemicals

[Pollution in People](#)

[WebMD](#)

Mercury and Pregnancy

[March of Dimes](#)



## Other Resources:

[Baby Center](#)

[March of Dimes](#)

[Toxic Matters](#) -PDF

[National Birth Defects Prevention Network](#)

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**Don't learn safety by accident**