

Help Prevent Birth Defects During Pregnancy



- 1 See your healthcare professional:** Maintain regularly scheduled visits
- 2 Take 400 mcg of folic acid daily:** vitamins and 100% fortified cereals
- 3 Maintain a healthy weight:** Talk to your healthcare provider
- 4 Control Chronic Conditions:** Diabetes, High Blood Pressure, Obesity, Epilepsy
- 5 Stop Smoking, Drinking, and Using Marijuana or Illicit Drugs:**
 - Smoking cigarettes or e-cigarettes can cause birth defects, low birth weights and infant death
 - There is no safe amount of alcohol to drink during pregnancy. Drinking during pregnancy can cause Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD)
 - Use of marijuana or illicit drugs can lead to preterm birth, low birth weight, and birth defects. Women using prescription drugs should speak with their doctor.
- 6 Taking Medications:**
 - Talk to your healthcare provider about medications you are taking including over the counter, dietary, prescription and herbal medicines
- 7 Protect against animal viruses:**
 - Do not clean litter boxes. Dirty cat litter can carry parasites. If you must clean it, wear gloves and wash hands afterward.
 - If you have a pet rodent (hamster, guinea pig, etc.), have someone else take care of it until the baby arrives. Some rodents might carry viruses.
- 8 Avoid Unpasteurized Foods:**
 - Do not eat soft cheeses, such as feta, brie, and queso fresco, unless they have labels that say they are pasteurized. Unpasteurized products can contain harmful bacteria.
- 9 Get Vaccinated:**
 - Talk to your healthcare provider about vaccines (Flu, Covid, etc.) that are recommended during pregnancy.
 - Some vaccines can help protect against infections that can cause birth defects.
- 10 Protect Against Infections:**
 - Protect against mosquito-borne illnesses by:
 - Wearing long sleeves, pants, a hat and socks
 - Using insect repellent with 20% DEET
 - Emptying outside items that hold water (planters, bird baths, etc.)
 - Installing and repairing window and door screens
 - Wash hands often with soap and water especially after:
 - Using the bathroom; Changing diapers; Being around people who are sick
 - Before and after touching and preparing food; Gardening or touching dirt or soil; Caring for or playing with children



www.health.ri.gov/programs/birthdefects

For more information see the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at:
www.cdc.gov/pregnancy/infections