

January 2019

NCWVCAA Health

Newsletter

Tiffany Pigott, LPN, NCWVCAA Health Program Specialist

JANUARY IS BIRTH DEFECTS PREVENTION MONTH

Birth defects are health conditions that are present at birth.

They can cause serious problems in your baby's overall health, how his body develops and how his body works. Birth Defects Prevention Month is a time to spread the word that there are things you can do to help prevent birth defects in your baby.

In the United States, about 1 in 33 babies (about 3 percent) is born with a birth defect each year.

Common birth defects include congenital heart defects, cleft lip and left palate and spina bifida. You can't always prevent birth defects in your baby. But if you're pregnant or thinking about having a baby, here's what you can do to help reduce the risk of birth defects and improve your chances of having a healthy baby:

- **Take folic acid before and during early pregnancy.** This can help prevent birth defects of the brain and spine called neural tube defects (also called NTDs) in your baby. Folic acid is a B vitamin that every cell in your body needs for normal growth and development. Before pregnancy, take a multivitamin that has 400 micrograms of folic acid in it every day. During pregnancy, take a prenatal vitamin that has 600 micrograms of folic acid in it every day. Take a multivitamin with folic acid every day, even if you're not trying to get pregnant.
- **Get a preconception checkup.** This is a medical checkup you get before pregnancy to help make sure you're healthy when you get pregnant. A

preconception checkup is especially important if you've already had a baby with a birth defect. Your health care provider can make sure you're healthy, check that your vaccinations are up to date and make sure any medicines that you take are safe to keep taking during pregnancy. Being exposed to certain medicines or infections in the womb can sometimes cause birth defects in a baby.

- **Don't drink alcohol during pregnancy.** Drinking alcohol during pregnancy makes your baby more likely to have premature birth (before 37 weeks of pregnancy), birth defects and a group of conditions called fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (also called FASDs). Alcohol can cause problems for your baby at any time in pregnancy, even before you know you're pregnant.
- **Protect yourself from common infections.** Wash your hands often, especially after using the bathroom, sneezing or coughing, changing a diaper or preparing food. Don't eat raw or undercooked food, including lunch meats. Cook meat, chicken and fish until done. Wash food before you cook or eat it. Don't touch cat poop or change a cat's litter box to protect you from toxoplasmosis.
- **Don't travel to a Zika-affected area, unless it's absolutely necessary.** Zika virus infection during pregnancy can cause a birth defect called microcephaly and other problems. If you do travel to a Zika-affected areas, protect yourself from mosquito bites. If your male or female sex partner may be infected with Zika, don't have sex. If you do have sex, use a condom. If you work in a health care setting, follow safety rules to protect yourself from exposure to Zika.

Learn more at:

<https://www.marchofdimes.org/january-is-birth-defects-prevention-month.aspx>

WVU Dentistry: Free Dental Day for Children

Monongalia County Health Department's Give Kids a Smile Day takes place at MCHD Dentistry on Friday, **Feb. 1** for kids up to age 18 **who don't have dental insurance**. Children can get a free dental cleaning and checkup including any necessary X-rays and fluoride treatments. The free dental care will be available from 9 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. at the university's Pediatric Dentistry Clinic. The care is being provided as part of WVU Dental Care's National Children's Dental Health Month celebrations.

To schedule an appointment for the free exam, please call **304-293-0401**.

GIVE KIDS A SMILE!
8 A.M. TO 5 P.M. FRIDAY, FEB. 1
FREE

*checkups, cleanings, fluoride treatments
 for uninsured children*



**Call 304-598-5108
 for an appointment.**

monchd.org/dentistry.html



January is Thyroid Awareness Month

Facts About Your Thyroid

- 1 The thyroid is a butterfly-shaped gland in the neck that controls metabolism and energy, and is hailed as the "master gland" of our complex interdependent endocrine system.
- 2 Symptoms of hypothyroidism include weight gain and fatigue — as well as constipation, depression, low body temperature and more.
- 3 It's estimated that hypothyroidism, or underactive thyroid, affects more than 30 million women and 15 million men.
- 4 Autoimmune disease accounts for 90 percent of Americans with hypothyroidism. The other 10 percent are afflicted with non-autoimmune hypothyroidism.
- 5 Hashimoto's is one of the most common autoimmune diseases in the United States. When a person has Hashimoto's, antibodies specifically attack and damage his or her thyroid tissue.
- 6 Patients with hypothyroidism suffer from symptoms that are rarely traced to a sluggish thyroid.
- 7 Eat foods with thyroid-friendly vitamins and minerals, such as vitamin D, iron, selenium, and zinc.
- 8 Some people need thyroid drugs to treat Hashimoto's.
- 9 The specific hormones the thyroid produces that are most critical to our health are triiodothyronine (T3) and thyroxine (T4), both of which regulate metabolism.
- 10 The body is designed to convert T4 to T3, but many people have trouble with this conversion, mostly due to stress.
- 11 T4 drugs like Synthroid or levothyroxine are often prescribed, but many still complain of symptoms even when lab results come back normal. What often works is a combination T4-T3 medication.

positive healthwellness

<https://experiencelife.com/article/11-facts-about-your-thyroid/>

If you have questions, suggestions for future health newsletters, or would like to join the NCWVCAA Health Services Advisory Committee, please contact Tiffany Pigott at tiffanypigott@ncwvcaa.org or 304-363-2170 ext. 124.