



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
Jan. 5, 2015

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Governor Dalrymple Proclaims *Birth Defects Prevention Month* in North Dakota

Bismarck, N.D. – Governor Jack Dalrymple has proclaimed January 2015 as *National Birth Defects Prevention Month* in North Dakota. In recognition, the North Dakota Department of Health continues to raise awareness about the frequency with which birth defects occur in the United States and the steps that can be taken to prevent them.

“Steps like visiting a health-care provider before pregnancy and taking a multivitamin every day can go a long way,” said Devaiah Muccatira, Research Analyst III / State System Development Initiative Coordinator. “The North Dakota Department of Health encourages prevention and awareness of birth defects among women of childbearing age in North Dakota.”

Birth defects are common, costly and critical. Every 4½ minutes, a baby is born with a major birth defect. Professionals, community groups and the public can act to reduce the risk of certain birth defects, detect those that occur as soon as possible and prevent secondary complications.

Not all birth defects can be prevented; however, all women, no matter what their age, can lower their risk of having a baby born with a birth defect by following some basic health guidelines throughout their reproductive years. This year we encourage all women to make a **PACT** for their own health and the family they may have one day.

Plan ahead

- Get as healthy as you can before you get pregnant
- Get 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid every day

Avoid harmful substances

- Avoid drinking alcohol and smoking
- Be careful with harmful exposures at work and home

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Choose a healthy lifestyle

- Eat a healthy diet that includes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low fat dairy, lean proteins, and healthy fats and oils
- Be physically active
- Work to get medical conditions like diabetes under control

Talk to your doctor

- Get a medical checkup
- Discuss all medications, both prescription and over-the-counter
- Talk about your family history

Women and their loved ones can participate in their **PACT** and take these important preventive steps that can lead to a reduction in the number of birth defects.

Children's Special Health Services is a division within the North Dakota Department of Health that offers services for many children with birth defects. For more information about services available and about *Birth Defects Prevention Month*, contact Devaiah Muccatira, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.4963 or dmuccatira@nd.gov.

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PROCLAMATION
BIRTH DEFECTS PREVENTION MONTH
JANUARY 2015

WHEREAS, birth defects can occur in any family regardless of race, health history, economic status, or level of education; and

WHEREAS, every four and one-half minutes a baby is born in the United States with a birth defect. Birth defects cause one in every five infant deaths and lead to \$2.6 billion per year in hospital costs alone in the United States. In North Dakota birth defects account for about twelve infant deaths every year; and

WHEREAS, about half of all pregnancies are unplanned, contributing to late entry into prenatal care and presenting a barrier to optimal pregnancy management, particularly during the crucial early weeks of embryonic development; and

WHEREAS, early identification of a child with a birth defect coupled with early intervention services typically improves the child's quality of life and may even save his or her life; and

WHEREAS, not all birth defects can be prevented, but there are steps that can be taken to increase a woman's chance of having a healthy baby. And, toward this end, The National Birth Defects Prevention Network and CDC have developed "Make a **PACT** for Prevention," to help young adults take steps to reduce the risk of birth defects. These include:

- Planning ahead for pregnancy
- Avoiding harmful substances
- Choosing a healthy lifestyle
- Talking to a healthcare provider before pregnancy; and

WHEREAS, the good health and well-being of the people of North Dakota are enhanced by the support of a national effort to educate about and prevent birth defects; and

WHEREAS, the North Dakota Department of Health joins with the March of Dimes, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the National Birth Defects Prevention Network, as well as many dedicated volunteers, healthcare professionals, and parent groups by participating in this promotion.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Jack Dalrymple, Governor of the State of North Dakota, do hereby proclaim January 2015 as **BIRTH DEFECTS PREVENTION MONTH**.