

# National Birth Defects Prevention Month

According to the CDC, birth defects affect 1 in 33 babies born every year.

## 1 Introduction

Birth defects impact a baby's overall health and how his/her body develops. National Birth Defects Prevention Month is a time to become informed about ways to increase the chances of having a healthy, full-term pregnancy and a healthy baby. Please use this guide as a reference for birth defect causes, diagnosis, prevention, and treatment.

## 2 Causes

Birth defects can occur at any stage of pregnancy. An individual's genetics, behaviors and social and environmental factors have an impact on birth defects. Other factors that increase the chance of birth defects include:

- Smoking, drinking alcohol or using other harmful substances
- Having certain medical conditions
- Being an older mother
- Family history of birth defect
- Taking certain medications

## 3 Diagnosis

Some birth defects can be diagnosed during pregnancy through prenatal testing. The prenatal test

only identifies the possibility of a birth defect and some women give birth to a healthy baby even after the test shows that a defect may be present. Most birth defects are found during the routine newborn screening or within the first year of life. If there are other concerns, parents may request more tests.

## 4 Prevention

Not all birth defects can be prevented. Some steps that women can take to have a healthy pregnancy and reduce the chance of birth defects include:

- Talk to your healthcare provider about medications and vaccines
- Maintain a healthy weight
- Take 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid every day
- Avoid harmful substances during pregnancy

## 5 Treatment

Some birth defects are minor and may not require treatment. In most cases, children with birth defects will need special care and management. Treatment depends on the severity of the condition but can include surgery, medicines, physical therapy, and education intervention.

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### Did you know?

In the United States, birth defects results in about \$2.6 billion in hospital costs annually

For more information on birth defects, please visit [www.marchofdimes.org](http://www.marchofdimes.org)

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### References:

<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/birth-defects.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefects/facts.html>