



**California Birth Defects
Monitoring Program**
Improving the health of babies

National Birth Defects Prevention Month

While every month is an opportunity to focus on preventing birth defects, January has been designated as National Birth Defects Prevention Month. Did you know that one in every 33 babies is born with a birth defect? This statistic has not changed for nearly 30 years.

For some birth defects, risk factors have been identified. However, for the majority of birth defects the causes remain unknown. At California Birth Defects Monitoring Program (CBDMP), we hope to answer these questions. For the past 25 years, we have worked to collect and analyze data to identify opportunities for preventing birth defects and improving the health of babies.

What We Do Know

Research has shown that lifestyle choices can affect pregnancy outcomes. Women need to have the opportunity to address health issues and change behavior prior to becoming pregnant. Good examples include bringing blood sugar or high blood pressure under control, and stopping smoking or drinking alcohol. Since 1992, women have been encouraged to take vitamins which contain folic acid in order to reduce the risk of having a baby born with a neural tube defect (which usually causes severe abnormalities of the spine or brain).

What We Have Yet to Discover

Yet even when a pregnant woman complies with every recommendation, there is still a chance that her baby could be born with a birth defect. At CBDMP we are compiling data that can be used by researchers to uncover some of the causes.

Resources

National Birth Defects Prevention Network

www.nbdpn.org

March of Dimes

www.marchofdimes.com