

# MotherToBaby Unveils 5 Effective Ways to Prevent Birth Defects, Offers Free Webinar

Tuesday, 08 January 2019 'Best for You. Best for Baby.'  
Focus of National Birth Defects Prevention Month 2019

BRENTWOOD, TN – “A baby is born with a birth defect in the United States every 4 ½ minutes. We can change that alarming statistic,” said Christina Chambers, PhD, MPH, President of MotherToBaby, a free service of the non-profit Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS). MotherToBaby is joining with leading prenatal health experts from the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), American Academy of Pediatrics, the March of Dimes, and the Teratology Society this month to increase awareness of 5 critical tips to reduce the chances of having a baby with a birth defect. The National Birth Defects Prevention Month campaign theme, “**Best for You. Best for Baby.**” aims to raise awareness of preventable birth defects.

“Furthermore, we want to emphasize the importance of pregnancy registries, which often lead to the discovery of even more ways to prevent birth defects,” explained Dr. Chambers, who also serves as professor of pediatrics at UC San Diego. MotherToBaby will join the Teratology Society and the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine in co-hosting a free two-part webinar series for healthcare providers on the importance of pregnancy exposure research, its challenges and the new Task Force on Research Specific to Pregnant and Lactating Women (PRGLAC) report. The webinar series will take place **Thursday January 17th at 1pm-1:30 ET** and **Tuesday January 29th at 12pm-12:30p ET** and will be free to join, but advanced registration is required at the following links:

- *Current and Future Trends in Research with Pregnant and Lactating Women (Part 1):*  
<http://bit.ly/PregResearch1>
- *Using Registries and Crowdsourcing to Conduct Research with Pregnant and Lactating Women (Part 2):*
- <http://bit.ly/PregResearch2>

MotherToBaby provides free evidence-based information to mothers, health care professionals, and the general public about medications and other exposures during pregnancy and while breastfeeding through its helpline (866) 626-6847, texting service (855) 999-3525, or via live chat and email on [www.MotherToBaby.org](http://www.MotherToBaby.org). MotherToBaby also has a free app available for **iOS** and **Android** devices. MotherToBaby is recommended by many agencies, including the CDC.

MotherToBaby encourages the public to follow these steps to increase chances of a having a healthy baby:

- 1 Be sure to take 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid every day. Folic acid is very important because it can help prevent some major birth defects of the baby's brain and spine.
- 2 Book a visit with your healthcare provider before stopping or starting any medicine. There are often benefits to continuing treatment throughout pregnancy. Discussing a treatment plan before a pregnancy allows a woman and her health care provider to weigh the pros and cons of all options to keep mom and baby as healthy as possible.

- 3 Become up-to-date with all vaccines, including the flu shot. Having the right vaccinations, like the flu and Tdap vaccines, at the right time during pregnancy can help keep a woman and her baby healthy.
- 4 Before you get pregnant, try to reach a healthy weight. Obesity increases the risk for several serious birth defects and other pregnancy complications.
- 5 Boost your health by avoiding harmful substances during pregnancy, such as alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. There is no known safe amount of alcohol during pregnancy and its exposure can cause major birth defects. Smoking during pregnancy can cause dangerous chemicals to damage the placenta and/or reach baby's bloodstream. The opioid addiction epidemic has led to a sharp increase in Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS), premature birth and drug withdrawal in developing babies.

"Birth defects are a common cause of death in the first year of a baby's life, but change happens through awareness," added Jason L. Salemi, PhD, MPH, NBDPN President. "We're thrilled MotherToBaby is doing its part to positively change the outcome for babies across North America."

### **How You Can Help**

MotherToBaby encourages health advocates as well as the general public to be active participants in National Birth Defects Prevention Month. Follow and share **#Best4YouBest4Baby** messages on social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. In addition, the complete 2019 NBDPN Birth Defects Prevention Month information packet, including this year's primary tips for birth defects prevention, "**Best for You. Best for Baby. 5 Tips for Preventing Birth Defects**," is available online at: <https://www.nbdpn.org/bdpm.php>. All materials can be printed, electronically conveyed, or added to websites for distribution as needed.

### **Additional Resources to Support Healthy Pregnancies**

#### *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

The CDC's National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities (NCBDDD) strives to advance the health and well-being of our nation's most vulnerable populations.

[www.CDC.gov/ncbddd](http://www.CDC.gov/ncbddd)

#### *American Academy of Pediatrics*

Dedicated to the health of all children, providing age-specific health information.

[www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org)

#### *The Teratology Society*

An international and multidisciplinary group of scientists including researchers, clinicians, epidemiologists, and public health professionals from academia, government and industry who study birth defects, reproduction, and disorders of developmental origin.

[www.Teratology.org](http://www.Teratology.org)

#### *March of Dimes*

An organization aiming to make sure babies get the strongest start possible as well as reducing the rate of prematurity.

[www.marchofdimes.org](http://www.marchofdimes.org)