

Birth Defect Awareness Month

January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month and Community Care Physicians would like you to know how you might be able to prevent birth defects.

What are Birth Defects?

Birth defects are structural or functional/developmental abnormalities. Structural applies to body parts and structure. Functional/developmental applies to how a body part or system works. Birth defects can cause physical, intellectual, and developmental disabilities, as well as many other health problems. Community Care Physicians understands the term “defect” is a tense word currently and stands to believe people born with these are not “defective.” However, until a better term is found, defect is the one most widely received.

“Best for You. Best for Baby.”

National Birth Defects Prevent Network (NBDPN) has themed this January’s National Birth Defects Prevention Month, “Best for You. Best for Baby”. This means when you take care of yourself, both you and your baby do well. Your health is important to put first while you are pregnant so that your child can be healthy too. Most of our tips for keeping your baby healthy will help keep you healthy in the long run too.

1 in 33 U.S. infants are born with a birth defect. It is also the leading cause of infant death in their first year of life. Therefore, Community Care Physicians strongly encourages that you speak with your doctor about preventing birth defects if you are pregnant or trying to get pregnant. While not all birth defects can be prevented, there are many measures you can take to keep you and your baby healthy.

PACT for Prevention.

Community Care Physicians and the NBDPN suggest making a *PACT* for prevention.

Plan ahead. If you are trying to get pregnant, talk with your doctor about how best to plan. Speak with them before starting or stopping any medications. It is common for women to take medications to remain healthy while pregnant, but it is also important to discuss any medication you are on before pregnancy or if you should take any for the pregnancy. Try to get fit and healthy while you are planning your pregnancy. Losing weight is not ideal while pregnant. Plan a healthy weight goal with your doctor.

Avoid harmful substances. This includes alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. It is important to stop all intake of harmful substances while pregnant or trying to get pregnant. If you are finding it difficult to stop, speak with your doctor to get help on this. Be mindful of harmful exposures at work and home. Read the labels on all cleaning supplies, and if you work in an office, try to keep it as clean and tidy as you can. Try avoiding animals and insects known to carry diseases. Wearing long sleeves and bug spray outdoors can go a long way in preventing diseases.

Choose a healthy lifestyle. Make sure you are up to date on your vaccines. Protecting yourself from getting the flu or whooping cough can help protect your baby from birth defects. Eating well and staying fit before and during pregnancy are important. Avoid infections by properly preparing food, such as raw eggs, raw sprouts, and steering clear of unpasteurized milk and cheese. Wash your hands to prevent viruses, such as CMV which can cause hearing loss, seizures, and other problems. NBDPN also suggests

taking 400 micrograms of Folic Acid daily. You can find this in vitamin form and in some foods, such as breads, breakfast cereals, and corn masa flour.

Talk to your healthcare provider. Your doctor will know best about how to keep you healthy. Get regular checkups and let your doctor know your family medical history so your doctor knows what to keep and eye out for in your pregnancy.

Community Care Physicians

Community Care Physicians is proud to have the office of CapitalCare Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrics. CapitalCare Developmental Pediatrics is devoted to helping children with developmental disabilities. Services include diagnostic and consultative medical service from experienced clinicians. All staff within the office are specially trained and highly experienced in working with children and families of special needs. The office is located at 7B Johnson Road in Latham and can be reached at (518) 782-7733. For more info, visit the website [here](#).

If you need to speak with a doctor about how to best prevent birth defects, Community Care Physician's Concierge Care Coordinator would be happy to direct you to the best provider for you. Call today at (518) 782-3800.

Sources:

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefects/prevention-month.html>

<https://www.nbdpn.org/bdpm.php>

<https://www.nbdpn.org/bdpm.php#Best%20for%20You,%20Best%20for%20Baby>

<https://www.nbdpn.org/bdpm.php#PreventToProtect>

<https://www.nbdpn.org/bdpm.php#Make%20a%20PACT>

https://www.nichd.nih.gov/about/overview/directors_corner/prev_updates/010715-birth-defects

<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/birthdefects>