



## TERATOLOGY EXPERTS UNVEIL 5 EFFECTIVE WAYS TO PREVENT BIRTH DEFECTS

**'Best for You. Best for Baby.'** Focus of National Birth Defects Prevention Month 2019

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Media Contact: **Nicole Chavez**  
619-368-3259 – or – [nchavez@teratology.org](mailto:nchavez@teratology.org)

**RESTON, VIRGINIA** – “Every 4 ½ minutes a baby is born with a birth defect in the United States. Simply put – it doesn’t have to be that common,” said Dana Shuey, PhD, DABT, Teratology Society President. That’s why the Teratology Society is joining with leading prenatal health experts from the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, American Academy of Pediatrics, the March of Dimes and MotherToBaby this month to increase awareness of 5 critical tips to reduce the chances of having a baby with a birth defect.

[The Teratology Society](#) is 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. It recently published its third edition of the [Teratology Primer](#), a free birth defects research introductory textbook for basic scientists, clinician scientists, healthcare professionals, trainees, policy makers, and anyone who has an interest in the field of teratology. The chapters can be read online at [www.Teratology.org/primer](http://www.Teratology.org/primer). Additionally, the Society is co-sponsoring a [Human Teratogens Course](#) at the University of South Florida for health care providers February 24 – 26, 2019 in Tampa. The course will provide up-to-date information on common exposures and critical public health issues such as Zika and opioids and is approved for AMA PRA Category 1 Credit™.

The National Birth Defects Prevention Month campaign theme, **“Best for You. Best for Baby.”** aims to raise awareness of preventing birth defects, which are a leading cause of death in the first year of a baby’s life. “While we can’t prevent all birth defects, the following steps increase a woman’s chance of having a healthy baby,” explained Dr. Shuey.

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 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 the Teratology Society is doing its part to positively change the outcome for babies across the United States.”

### **How You Can Help**

The Teratology Society 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 – just a couple of ways that birth defects can be prevented through education. 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**

#### *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)

#### *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)

*MotherToBaby, a free service of the non-profit Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS)*

Communicate directly with experts about exposures, like medications, vaccines and more, during pregnancy and breastfeeding by calling toll-free (866) 626-6847, texting questions to (855) 999-3525, live chatting or emailing at

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