



Jackson County Department of Public Health

Anna Lippard
Interim Health Director
828-587-8225

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JANUARY IS NATIONAL BIRTH DEFECTS AWARENESS MONTH: EVERY JOURNEY MATTERS

Birth defects are structural changes that can affect almost any part of the body, such as the heart, brain, or foot, and can cause lifelong health challenges. Birth defects are common, affecting 1 in every 33 babies born in the United States each year. According to the CDC, every 4 ½ minutes, a baby is born with a birth defect in the United States. That means nearly 120,000 babies are affected by birth defects each year. Not all birth defects can be prevented, and they can occur in any family, regardless of race, ethnicity, health history, or economic status.

National Birth Defects Awareness Month is a time to raise awareness about birth defects and highlight efforts to improve the health of people living with these conditions across their lifespan. As early identification, medical care and treatment have improved, babies and children with birth defects are living longer and healthier lives.

This year's theme is "Every Journey Matters", and highlights that from prior to diagnosis, throughout childhood and adulthood, every individual impacted by birth defects matters.

The JCDPH encourages all pregnant people and prospective parents to make healthy choices and adopt healthier habits to help lower their risk of having a baby born with a birth defect.

5 Healthy Pregnancy Tips:

1. Be sure to take 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid every day at least one month prior to conception.
2. Plan a visit with your health care provider to support a healthy pregnancy.
3. Reduce your risk of infections.
4. Care for your body and mind before and during pregnancy to set you and your baby up for success.
5. Avoid harmful substance during pregnancy, such as alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

Pregnancy is an exciting time, but it also can be stressful. Knowing that you are doing all that you can to get ready for pregnancy, staying healthy during pregnancy, and giving your baby a healthy start in life will help you to have peace of mind. Learn more at <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefects/index.html> or call 828-586-8994 to speak with a JCDPH public health nurse.

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