



**NORTH DAKOTA**  
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

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## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:  
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### ***Governor Dalrymple Proclaims Birth Defects Prevention Month in North Dakota Event Focuses on Addressing Medication Use Before and During Pregnancy***

BISMARCK, N.D. – Gov. Jack Dalrymple has proclaimed January 2011 as *Birth Defects Prevention Month* in North Dakota. To highlight ways to prevent birth defects, the North Dakota Department of Health is joining the National Birth Defects Prevention Network to alert women of childbearing age about the safe use of medications before and during pregnancy, according to Devaiah Muccatira with the department’s Division of Children’s Special Health Services.

“Pregnant women should discuss any medications they are using, whether prescription or over-the-counter, with a doctor,” Muccatira said. “Most women know that certain prescription medications can be harmful during pregnancy, but they may not be aware that some dietary supplements and herbal remedies can harm a developing baby and possibly cause birth defects.”

Medication use during pregnancy is common; two out of three women take prescription medications during pregnancy. Not all medications should be discontinued during pregnancy; some may need to be changed or adjusted. Medical conditions such as diabetes, influenza and asthma need to be managed during pregnancy and may harm both mother and baby if left untreated. In some cases, doctors may need to weigh the benefits of a medication against the potentially harmful effects.

A baby’s organs, such as the heart, brain and spine, begin developing the first few weeks of pregnancy, sometimes before a woman realizes she is pregnant. For that reason, it is important for women to have conversations with their health-care provider about medications before pregnancy.

“Small steps like visiting a health-care provider before and during pregnancy, taking a multivitamin with folic acid every day, eating a healthy diet, avoiding alcohol and getting vaccinated against the flu can improve the likelihood of delivering a healthy baby,” Muccatira said.

For more information about *Birth Defects Prevention Month*, contact Devaiah Muccatira, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.4963 or [dmuccatira@nd.gov](mailto:dmuccatira@nd.gov).

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PROCLAMATION  
**BIRTH DEFECTS PREVENTION MONTH**  
JANUARY 2011

**WHEREAS**, birth defects can occur in any family, regardless of the parents' race, health history, economic status or education; and

**WHEREAS**, birth defects affect one in every 33 babies in the United States and are a leading cause of death; in North Dakota, about one in every five infant deaths are the result of birth defects; and

**WHEREAS**, early identification of a child with a birth defect and early intervention services typically improve the child's quality of life, and may even save his or her life; and

**WHEREAS**, two out of three women take prescription medications during pregnancy, many to treat chronic conditions; it is important for women to visit with their healthcare provider about medications before pregnancy; and

**WHEREAS**, women are encouraged to take a multivitamin with folic acid during pregnancy to prevent serious defects of the brain and spinal cord, and manage maternal medical conditions while minimizing unnecessary medication exposure during pregnancy.

**NOW, THEREFORE**, as the Governor of the State of North Dakota, I do hereby proclaim January 2011, **BIRTH DEFECTS PREVENTION MONTH** in the state of North Dakota.

Jack Dalrymple  
Governor

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