



RELEASE DATE: March 3, 2017

CONTACT: Michele Kling, (914) 997-4613, mkling@marchofdimes.org
Angie Thies, (614) 208-3794, athies@marchofdimes.org

MARCH OF DIMES OBSERVES WORLD BIRTH DEFECTS DAY
Calls for More Prevention, Research and Care for Babies

MADISON, WI, MARCH 3 – The March of Dimes today joins more than 75 organizations worldwide in observing the third annual World Birth Defects Day. The March of Dimes is one of several founding organizations that launched this day in 2015 to raise awareness of the serious global problem of birth defects and urge more research, prevention, and care to give every baby a healthy start in life.

An estimated 8 million babies around the world are born with a serious birth each year. Birth defects are a leading cause of death in the first year of life, and babies who survive may be physically or mentally disabled, taking a costly toll on their families, communities and nations. Birth defect conditions lead to \$2.6 billion per year in hospital costs alone in the United States, with birth defects accounting for about 23.3% of all infant deaths in Wisconsin every year. In Wisconsin, an estimated 2/3 of birth defects are not reported.

In addition to funding important birth defects research, the March of Dimes also provides educational resources to help women be as healthy as possible during pregnancy and reduce the risk of birth defects. Top tips for a healthy baby:

- Start taking a daily multivitamin containing the B vitamin folic acid, even if you're not trying to get pregnant, to prevent serious birth defects of the brain and spine.

- Be up-to-date with your vaccinations (shots). Talk to your healthcare provider about vaccinations you should receive before or during pregnancy, including the flu shot and Tdap booster.
- Don't eat raw or undercooked meat, raw or runny eggs, unpasteurized (raw) juice or dairy products, raw sprouts -- or products made with them, and handle foods safely.
- Maintain good hygiene. Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially before preparing or eating foods; after being around or touching pets and other animals; and after changing diapers or wiping runny noses.
- Protect yourself from animals and insects known to carry diseases such as Zika virus, including mosquitos. This includes avoiding travel to areas where the virus is circulating. Find out more at ZAPzika.org or nacersano.org/zika.
- Stay away from wild or pet rodents, live poultry, lizards and turtles during pregnancy.
- Let someone else clean the cat litter boxes!

The March of Dimes is the leading nonprofit organization for pregnancy and baby health. For more than 75 years, moms and babies have benefited from March of Dimes research, education, vaccines, and breakthroughs. For the latest resources and health information, visit our websites marchofdimes.org and nacersano.org. If you have been affected by prematurity or birth defects, visit our shareyourstory.org community to find comfort and support. You can also find us on [Facebook](#) or follow us on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).