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February Newsletter

## March of Dimes Celebrates 83 years!

March of Dimes has been fighting for the health of all moms and babies for 83 years. From funding the cure for Polio to championing the fortification of all grain products to prevent birth defects, there have been some phenomenal feats! But there is more to be done. [Learn more about the accomplishments of March of Dimes here and join the fight!](#) Here are some steps you can take to do your part!

### Action Steps:

1. [Volunteer Opportunities \(marchofdimes.org\)](#)
2. Sign up for [Action Alerts](#)
3. Join Ready for Life NC's Community Health Champions and Community Health Navigators Program [here](#)



## National Birth Defects Month

January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month and as we kick off a new year full of health, fitness, and opportunity, read about factors that can impact your risk for birth defects and actions that you can take to have a healthy pregnancy, baby, and you!

Birth defects are structural changes that affect parts of the body. They develop during the first three months of pregnancy, a crucial stage for organ development and overall fetal health. The CDC estimates, 1 in 33 babies each year are born with birth defects. Common birth defects include: congenital heart defects, cleft lip, cleft palate, and spina bifida.

While genetics, social factors, behaviors, and environmental factors may play a role in birth defects, there are steps that you can take to achieve your most optimal health!

The National Birth Defects Prevention Network recognizes the theme of 2021 is "Best for You. Best for Baby." And while not all birth defects can be prevented, you can increase your chances of having a healthy baby by establishing your healthiest self before, during, and after pregnancy. Ready for Life NC's vision is that individuals will enter pregnancy when they choose, how they choose, and in their best possible health. Learn more about what you can do today below and share your journey to your healthiest self!



• **Follow 6 Tips:** [Watch this video](#) and review the tips below to learn about the healthy behaviors you can take to prepare for pregnancy and your baby.

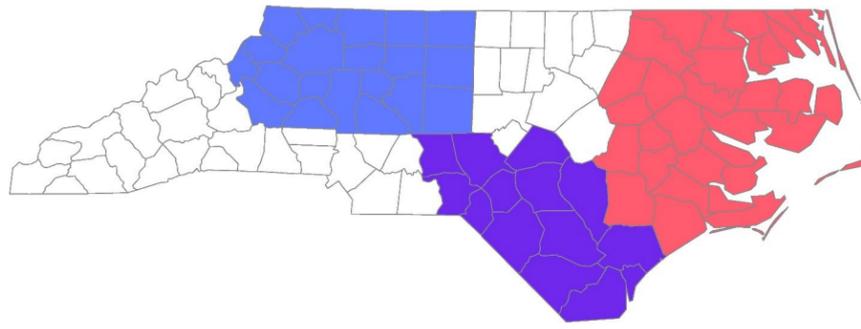
1. **Protect yourself from COVID-19.** Stay safe and help prevent the spread of COVID-19 by wearing a face mask and practicing social distancing. Remember to check for new guidance from the CDC to stay safe
2. **Be sure to take 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid every day.** Before becoming pregnant and during pregnancy, take a multivitamin containing 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid every day. Taking folic acid before and during early pregnancy can help prevent neural tube defects in your baby. Eat foods that contain folate, the natural form of folic acid, such as lentils, green leafy vegetables, black beans and orange juice and foods made from fortified grain products (some breads, breakfast cereals) and fortified corn masa flour (corn tortillas, tacos)
3. **Get a pre-pregnancy checkup.** See your health care provider to talk about managing your health conditions and creating a treatment plan before each pregnancy. Speak with them about all of the prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins and supplements you're taking, and especially before you stop or start any medication
4. **Stay up-to-date on vaccines.** Speak with your health care provider about the vaccines you need during each pregnancy to help protect yourself and your baby against serious diseases. Get the flu shot before or during each pregnancy and get the whooping cough vaccine between 27 and 36 weeks of pregnancy. Also make sure everyone in your family is up to date on their vaccinations to help prevent the spread of diseases. Ask your health care provider about when the COVID-19 vaccine will be available for pregnant and breastfeeding women.
5. **Before you get pregnant, try to reach a healthy weight.** Being overweight or underweight can affect your fertility and during pregnancy obesity can increase the risk of having a baby with a birth defect and other complications. Talk to your health care provider about how to get to a healthy weight before getting pregnant. Maintain a healthy lifestyle that includes eating healthy foods and regular physical activity.
6. **Avoid substances that are harmful during pregnancy.**

LEARN MORE



## Community Health Navigators and Community Health Champions

I am excited to start the year with two incredible programs to share. We are actively seeking applicants from NC Regions 2, 5, and 6.



Our **Community Health Champions and Community Health Navigators** programs.

#### **Community Health Champions**

Community Health Navigators (CHNs) will have the opportunity to provide reproductive life planning resources in navigating health systems and aid in securing a primary care provider. CHN's will help to ensure that individuals will enter pregnancy when they choose, how they choose, and in their best possible health through peer health education. (48 participants who each educate 24 of their peers, each guide 12 individuals into primary care)

#### **Community Health Navigators**

Ready for Life NC is looking for Community Health Champions who will serve on public, private, and/or community based advisory boards to educate, train, and advocate for meaningful preconception health programs and policies. This is a great opportunity for leaders in the field to share their knowledge, serve as resources to their community, and provide the representation needed in their region. (30 participants who serve on at least 1 board each)

A great professional opportunity to support your community and advocate for health, wellness, and a happy lifestyle. Here are a few benefits to highlight:

- [Program commitment: Jan – April](#)
- [Incentives and stipend available \(\\$250 CHN \\$300 CMC\)](#)
- [Recognition as a March of Dimes volunteer](#)
- [Peer education training](#)
- [Networking opportunities](#)
- [Recognized as a community resource for actionable impact](#)

Please share this information with interested individuals! We want you!

For more information or questions, please contact Shavette Campbell, [SCampbell@marchofdimes.org](mailto:SCampbell@marchofdimes.org)

APPLY NOW

## **Preconception Health News**



January 25, 2021 - [Low-dose aspirin may improve pregnancy chances for women with one or two prior miscarriages](#)

January 28, 2021- [Leveraging Longitudinal Clinical Laboratory Results to Improve Prenatal Care](#)

January 5, 2021 - [Study: Oregon's Medicaid Expansion Improved Birth Outcomes, Access to Prenatal Care](#)

January 11, 2021 - [Impacts of Medicaid expansion prior to conception on pre-pregnancy health, pregnancy health, and outcomes](#)

Jan. 22, 2021 - [Cannabis Use May Be Tied to More Difficulty Conceiving](#)

## **Upcoming Events**



Ready for Life NC Professional Education Trainings

For webinar information click the links below:

**February 18, 2021** - [March of Dimes Ready for Life North Carolina: Perinatal Care Region II - Series 3 of 4: Taking Action on Preconception Health: Achieving Healthy Weight in Food Deserts: Addressing SDOH, Healthy Equity, and Food Insecurity in the Preconception Period \(southernregionalahec.org\)](#)

**February 23, 2021** - [March of Dimes Ready for Life: Racial Disparities of Maternal and Infant Mortality in North Carolina \(southernregionalahec.org\)](#)

**March 30, 2021** - [March of Dimes Ready for Life: Tobacco Cessation and Preconception/Interconception Health \(southernregionalahec.org\)](#)

MORE UPCOMING EVENTS

## March of Dimes News



- [March for Babies – A mother of a movement – join today](#)
- March of Dimes is holding a free webinar, "[Become an Advocate for Maternal Mental Health](#)" for staff, volunteers and supporters on Thursday, February 18th at 1pm ET
- [March of Dimes and UnhitedHealthCare collaborate to improve maternal health and reduce racial disparities in outcomes - January 12, 2021](#)
- [March of Dimes Statement on COVID-19 Vaccination and pregnant and lactating people - January 12, 2021](#)
- [Dr. Zsakeba Henderson Joins March of Dimes as Deputy Chief Medical and Health Officer - January 12, 2021](#)

## Important Links to Bookmark



- [March of Dimes Ready For Life NC March of Dimes Nacersano](#)
- [CDC's National Preconception Health and Health Care Initiative](#)
- [NC Division of Public Health - Women's Health Branch](#)
- [Office on Women's Health, US Dept. of Health & Human Services](#)
- [Prematurity Prevention Office on Women's Health, US Dept. of Health & Human Services](#)
- [Prematurity Prevention](#)

For more information please visit: <https://www.ncpreconceptionhealth.org/>

**HEALTHY  
MOMS.  
STRONG  
BABIES.**



DONATE NOW



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