

January

2018

NATIONAL BIRTH DEFECTS PREVENTION MONTH

Prevent to Protect:
Prevent infections for baby's protection

Birth defects *affect* us all.



What *effect* will YOU have on birth defects?

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Greetings

The National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN) Education and Outreach Committee is excited to share the 2018 National Birth Defects Prevention Month packet. This packet was developed in collaboration with many partners, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), March of Dimes (MoD), Teratology Society (TS) and MotherToBaby.

The theme for 2018 is “**Prevent to Protect: Prevent infections for baby’s protection.**” We know that not all birth defects can be prevented. But, we also know that women can increase their chances of having a healthy baby by reducing their risk of getting an infection during pregnancy. Please encourage all pregnant women and those who may become pregnant to:

- **Get vaccinated.**
 - Get the flu shot and the whooping cough vaccine.
 - Become up-to-date with all vaccines before getting pregnant.
- **Prevent insect bites.**
 - Use insect repellent.
 - Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outside.
 - Consider avoiding travel to areas with Zika virus.
- **Practice good hygiene.**
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water.
 - Avoid putting a young child’s cup or pacifier in your mouth.
- **Talk to your healthcare provider.**
 - Ask about how you can prevent infections, such as Zika virus.
 - Discuss how to prevent sexually transmitted infections.

In 2018 we encourage you to make it your goal to increase the awareness that birth defects are “Common, Costly, and Critical.” NBDPN offers actionable steps that can be used by professionals, community groups, and the public to prevent birth defects. Specially designed materials to help you spread the word and engage your communities are available on the [NBDPN website](#) and can be tailored to your specific agency’s mission, needs, and capacity. We hope you find these materials useful as you work to increase awareness of birth defects and highlight prevention activities during January and throughout the year.

If you should have questions about National Birth Defects Prevention Month, please contact Mary Knapp (Mary.Knapp@doh.nj.gov).

Thank you in advance for your support in promoting National Birth Defects Prevention Month.

Sincerely,
Mary Knapp
NBDPN Education & Outreach Committee Chair

● Sharing this Packet ●

Materials in this packet can be downloaded from NBDPN at www.nbdpn.org. All materials can be printed, shared, and distributed as needed. Copies of brochures can be requested from their creators and most are available at no cost. Here are a few suggested groups or partners to target for packet dissemination:

Schools: Health educators and school nurses at middle schools, high schools, colleges, and universities in your state can share materials with teachers and students. Encourage school health education teachers to incorporate these messages into their lesson plans. Professors at Schools of Nursing and Public Health at both the undergraduate and graduate levels might want to include information in their curricula.

Non-profit organizations that have a similar mission: March of Dimes chapters, advocacy groups, and family support groups, like Family Voices, can promote information to policy makers.

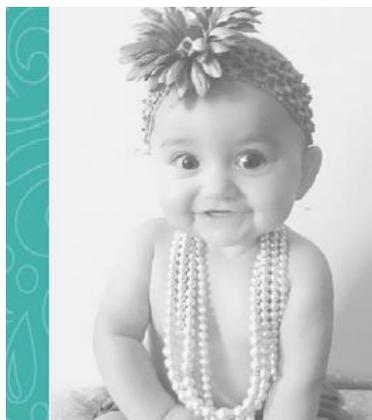
Local chapters of professional societies: Your state's chapter of professional organizations, such as the American Medical Association, American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, American Public Health Association, nursing organizations, and genetic associations can share up-to-date materials through their meetings, newsletters, and conferences.

Local services: Share the information packet with your state's established health programs, including Maternal and Child Health (MCH); Children's Special Health Care Services (CSHCS); Reproductive Health; Family Planning; Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); and Medicaid. The Fetal and Infant Mortality Review Program (FIMR) in your state may be interested in prevalence and mortality statistics and prevention resources.

Other health programs in your state: This message complements messaging for many disease prevention programs. Promote these materials to your state health department partners and call on them to help disseminate these resources in order to maximize impact.

Local health departments & hospitals: If your state has local public health departments, share this packet with each department. Your state's Health and Hospital Association and healthcare provider organizations may be interested in issues surrounding birth defects and in helping spread prevention messages to their members.

Women's services: Remember that young women are an important demographic to target. Child and Adolescent Health Centers (CAHC), school-based health centers, family planning clinics, and physician groups can incorporate prevention messages into their programs and their conversations with patients.



● Using Materials in this Packet ●

Are you interested in participating in National Birth Defects Prevention Month, but you aren't sure how? We make it easy for you with this list of ideas! Each activity can be done individually or in coordination with partners at the state or community level to raise awareness about birth defects and steps that can be taken to promote healthy pregnancies and positive birth outcomes. We invite you to use the packet to design your own promotions, pick and choose relevant content for your audiences, and copy or adapt contents to take advantage of particular news or issues in your community. Here are a few ideas:

Distribute to local public health and other partners:

- Send the packet to your local public health departments and other community partners. These partners could include local grantees, non-profits, provider's offices, or clinics.
- Send the packet over email as an attachment or as a link to the NBDPN website. You could break down the packet into chunks or tailor the contents to include materials most relevant to partners. For example, send sample drop-in articles to partners to include in their newsletters or post on their websites. Encourage partners to ask you questions, share resources, and tell you about things they use from the packet.

Create a buzz with social media:

- Using social media (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest) is a popular way to quickly spread messages to your target audience. Use compelling images and videos to generate interest in your message and link to the National Birth Defects Prevention Network website or your organization's Birth Defects Prevention Month webpage. Don't forget to use the hashtag: #Prevent2Protect!

Prepare a table at events or in your building:

- Use the content, wording, and graphics from the packet to stock an informational table. You can create a tri-fold display, handouts for people to take, and more! Staff the table to answer questions, or leave it set up for people to browse. Partners could do this in their locations as well.

Make news:

- Customize the sample news release with information, stories, or events happening in your community. Submit news releases, articles, and op-eds to local news venues to publish, post on websites, or share through social media.

● Prevent to Protect Theme Resources ●

Before and during pregnancy, some infections can increase the risk of birth defects and other health problems. Here are some helpful tips for pregnant women or women planning a pregnancy.

Get vaccinated.

Check with your health care provider to be sure that your flu and whooping cough vaccinations are up-to-date before getting pregnant. Your healthcare provider can also tell you about vaccinations you should receive during pregnancy.

Get the flu shot and whooping cough vaccine.

- The flu and whooping cough can cause serious illness in pregnant women and their developing babies. Getting vaccinated can help protect your child for several months after they are born. Doctors recommend getting the vaccine for whooping cough in your third trimester.
- Getting the flu isn't restricted to flu season. Stay on the safe side and get the flu shot before you become pregnant or as soon as possible after you know you are pregnant.

Become up-to-date with all vaccines before getting pregnant.

- Getting your vaccines can help prevent symptoms related to certain infections, such as fever, which can be harmful to a developing baby. Talk to your doctor to find out what vaccines they recommend you receive before getting pregnant, including the MMR vaccine. Don't forget to encourage other members of your family to get vaccinated too!



Resources for Women/Families

Pregnant Women & Influenza (Flu) | CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/pregnant.htm>

Learn more about flu prevention and pregnant women.

Seasonal Influenza in Pregnancy Fact Sheet | MotherToBaby

<https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/seasonal-influenza-the-flu-pregnancy/>

Read about the known effects of seasonal influenza exposure during pregnancy.

Flu Vaccine Safety and Pregnancy | CDC https://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/qa_vacpregnant.htm

Learn more details about the Flu Vaccine including side effects and considerations regarding allergies.

Get the Whooping Cough Vaccine While You Are Pregnant | CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/pertussis/pregnant/mom/get-vaccinated.html>

Learn more about receiving the whooping cough vaccine during pregnancy.

Vaccinations and Pregnancy | March of Dimes <https://www.marchofdimes.org/pregnancy/vaccinations-during-pregnancy.aspx>

March of Dimes' guidelines for the vaccines you need before, during, and after pregnancy

Prevent insect bites.

Pregnant women should take steps to reduce their risk of being bitten by a mosquito. Mosquitos can carry several infections, including West Nile virus, Dengue virus, malaria, and Zika virus. Zika infection during pregnancy can cause a serious birth defect called microcephaly, a sign of incomplete brain development.

What you can do to prevent insect bites:

Use [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\) registered insect repellents](#) with one of the following active ingredients: DEET, picaridin, IR3535, or oil of lemon eucalyptus (paramenthane-3,8-diol).

- Insect repellants prevent bites by making people less attractive to mosquitos and ticks. When used as directed, EPA-registered insect repellents are proven safe and effective, even for pregnant and breastfeeding women.

When mosquitos are active wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants.

- Mosquitos can carry several infections, including [West Nile virus](#), [Dengue virus](#), [malaria](#), and [Zika virus](#). Ticks can also carry many infections, such as [Lyme disease](#). These infections can be dangerous to your unborn baby. Lyme disease that goes untreated can cause brain, nerve, spinal cord, and heart problems while Zika infection during pregnancy can cause a serious birth defect called [microcephaly](#).
- Mosquitos are most active at dusk and dawn while ticks are active at all times of the day, typically in warmer months. Minimizing areas of exposed skin by wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants, boots, and hats can help prevent bites.

Consider avoiding travel to areas with Zika virus.

- Because Zika infection during pregnancy can cause severe birth defects, pregnant women should not travel to affected areas. Partners of pregnant women and couples considering pregnancy should know the [risks to pregnancy and take prevention steps](#). All travelers should strictly follow [steps to prevent mosquito bites](#) and [prevent sexual transmission](#) during and after the trip. When traveling to visit friends or family, think about possible health risks during your trip. If Zika is in the area you are visiting, protect yourself and loved ones from mosquito bites.



Resources for Women/Families

Avoid Bug Bites | CDC

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/avoid-bug-bites>

Prevent bug bites-what to know before you go!

Find the Insect Repellent that is Right for You | EPA

<https://www.epa.gov/insect-repellents/find-insect-repellent-right-you>

Use the search tool to help you choose the repellent product that is right for you. You can specify the insect, protection time, active ingredient, or other product-specific information.

Zika Virus-Protect yourself & Others | CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/prevention/protect-yourself-and-others.html>

Tips to help protect you, your partner, your family, your friends, and your community from Zika.

Avoid Mosquito Bites | CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/Features/stopmosquitoes/index.html>

Feature on preventing diseases like Zika, dengue, and chikungunya that are spread by mosquitoes.

Zika Information for Travel to Areas with a Risk of Zika | MotherToBaby

<https://mothertobaby.org/zika-central-your-1-stop-for-the-latest-information/>

Find current information from the CDC, MotherToBaby and March of Dimes regarding the Zika Virus.

Zika Virus Fact Sheet | MotherToBaby

<https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/zika-virus-pregnancy/>

Contact a MotherToBaby expert regarding the Zika virus.

Women & Their Partners Trying to Become Pregnant | CDC

<https://www.cdc.gov/zika/pregnancy/women-and-their-partners.html>

Learn about how to prevent Zika virus while trying to become pregnant.

Travel Health Notices | CDC

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>

Travel notices are designed to inform travelers and clinicians about current health issues related to specific destinations. Check this list before traveling.

Health Information for Travelers | CDC

<http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/list>

Learn actions you can take to stay healthy and safe on your trip.



Practice good hygiene.

Hygiene refers to the activities that help prevent the spread of infections. Personal hygiene can include hand washing, bathing, and brushing your teeth. Practicing good hygiene is one of the simplest steps that women can take to prevent infections. Many diseases and conditions are spread by not maintaining good hygiene.

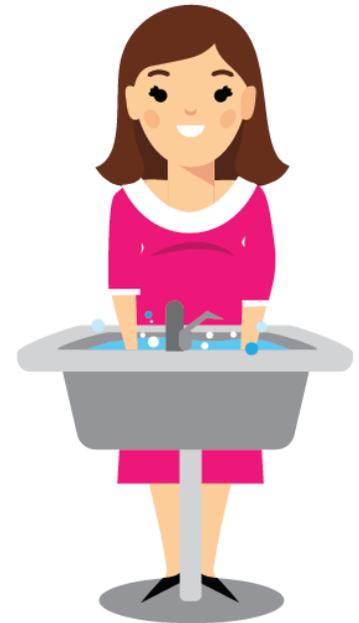
What you can do to practice good hygiene:

Wash your hands often with soap and water.

- Washing your hands is an easy step that can help prevent infections. Microbes and germs that spread illness can linger on hands after you touch something. To remove as many germs as possible rinse your hands under clean running water, lather with soap (remember to lather both the back and front!), scrub your hands together for 20 seconds, and then rinse with clean running water. Always remember to wash your hands after contact with any bodily fluids, such as saliva or urine.

Avoid putting a young child's cups or pacifiers in your mouth.

- Children's saliva or urine may contain a virus called [cytomegalovirus \(CMV\)](#), which women can pass to their baby during pregnancy. Becoming infected with CMV can increase your developing baby's risk for birth defects. Practicing good hygiene and avoiding bodily fluids can decrease your risk of CMV infection.



Resources for Women/Families

When & How to Wash Your Hands | CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>

Learn more about when and how to wash your hands, the importance of using soap and water, and what you can do if soap and clean, running water are not available.

Cytomegalovirus and Pregnancy | March of Dimes

<http://www.marchofdimes.org/complications/cytomegalovirus-and-pregnancy.aspx>

Learn how you can protect yourself from CMV.

Body, Facial, & Dental Hygiene | CDC

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/hygiene/body/index.html>

Learn how keeping your whole body clean can prevent hygiene-related diseases.

Simple Steps to Prevent Infections during Pregnancy | American Academy of Pediatrics

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/prenatal/Pages/Simple-Steps-to-Prevent-Infections-During-Pregnancy.aspx>

Check out these eleven tips on how to prevent infections during pregnancy.

Talk to your healthcare provider.

Whether you are currently planning a pregnancy or not, talk to your healthcare provider about preconception and reproductive health care. Healthcare providers will tell you what you can do to prevent infections, like influenza, Zika and sexually transmitted diseases (referred to as STIs or STDs), before and during pregnancy.

Consider discussing these topics with your healthcare provider to reduce your risk of getting an infection during pregnancy:

How you can prevent infections, such as Zika virus.

- Ensure you're protecting yourself from all types of infections by talking to your health care provider. They can provide you with the important steps you need to take to prevent infections, such as Zika virus, from affecting you and your developing baby.

How to prevent sexually transmitted infections (STDs).

- Your partner may not show symptoms even when they are infected with certain viruses and STDs. Avoiding sex eliminates your risk of getting an infection, but you can also take action to protect yourself by using condoms and dental dams, which can lower your risk of infection.



Resources for Women/Families

STDs during Pregnancy | CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/std/pregnancy/stdfact-pregnancy-detailed.htm>

Details on the effects of specific STIs during a woman's pregnancy with links to web pages with additional information.

Group B Strep (GBS) Prevention in Newborns | CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/groupbstrep/about/prevention.html>

Strategies to prevent GBS in newborn infants.

Urinary Tract Infections during Pregnancy | American Academy of Family Physicians

<http://www.aafp.org/afp/2000/0201/p721.html>

Learn more about UTIs during pregnancy.

Zika Virus-Protect Yourself & Others | CDC

<http://www.cdc.gov/zika/prevention/protect-yourself-and-others.html>

Tips to help protect you, your partner, your family, your friends, and your community from Zika.

Sexually Transmitted Infections | March of Dimes

<https://www.marchofdimes.org/complications/sexually-transmitted-infections.aspx>

Learn how you can protect yourself and your baby from STIs.

● Sample Proclamation ●

National Birth Defects Prevention Month, January 2018

Birth defects are common, costly, and critical. While many unknown factors play a role in birth defects occurrence, steps can be taken to help prevent or limit certain risks for birth defects, such as exposure to chemicals in the home or at work, use of alcohol and street drugs, a lack of folic acid in a woman's diet, lack of prenatal care, and infections during pregnancy.

- Whereas, Every 4 ½ minutes, a U.S. baby is born with a birth defect. Birth defects are a leading cause of death in the first year of life, causing one in every five infant deaths. These conditions lead to \$2.6 billion per year in hospital costs alone in the United States. In [State] birth defects account for about [###] infant deaths every year; and
- Whereas, Birth defects can occur in any family regardless of race, ethnicity, health history, economic status, or level of education; and
- Whereas, About half of all pregnancies are unplanned, contributing to late entry into prenatal care and presenting a barrier to optimal pregnancy management, particularly during the crucial first weeks of a baby's development; and
- Whereas, Early identification of a child with a birth defect coupled with early intervention services typically improves the child's quality of life and may even save his or her life; and
- Whereas, Taking steps to avoid infections during pregnancy can reduce the chance that a child is born with a birth defect. The National Birth Defects Prevention Network and CDC encourage parents-to-be to reduce the chance of developing an infection during pregnancy by observing the following guidelines:
- Get vaccinated.
 - Prevent insect bites.
 - Practice good hygiene.
 - Talk to your healthcare provider.
- Whereas, The good health and well-being of the people of [State] are enhanced by the support of a national effort to educate about preconception health and strategies to prevent birth defects; and
- Whereas, The [State Department of Health Services] and the [State Birth Defects Monitoring Program] join with the March of Dimes, the American Academy of Pediatrics, Teratology Society, MotherToBaby, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the National Birth Defects Prevention Network, as well as many dedicated volunteers, healthcare professionals, and parent groups by participating in this promotion.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, -----, Governor of the State of -----, do hereby proclaim January 2018 as
NATIONAL BIRTH DEFECTS PREVENTION MONTH.

● Drop-In Articles ●

January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month (50 words)

In the United States, a baby is born with a birth defect every 4 ½ minutes leading to 120,000 babies affected each year. All mothers can **prevent infections for their baby's protection** by getting vaccinated, preventing insect bites, practicing good hygiene, and talking to their healthcare provider. Learn more: www.nbdpn.org

January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month (100 words)

In the United States, a baby is born with a birth defect every 4 ½ minutes leading to 120,000 babies affected each year. Although not all birth defects can be prevented, steps can be taken to increase a woman's chance of having a healthy baby. Some infections before and during pregnancy can increase the risk of birth defects and other health problems. Women can **prevent infections for baby's protection** by getting vaccinated, preventing insect bites, practicing good hygiene, and talking to their healthcare provider. Learn more: www.nbdpn.org Share your own tips for a healthy pregnancy using #Prevent2Protect on social media.

January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month (150 words)

Birth defects are common, costly, and critical. In the United States, a baby is born with a birth defect every 4 ½ minutes. Birth defects are the most common cause of death in the first year of life and the second most common cause of death in children aged one to four years.

Although not all birth defects can be prevented, steps can be taken to increase a woman's chance of having a healthy baby. Some infections before and during pregnancy can increase the risk of birth defects and other health problems.

Here are some helpful tips for pregnant women or women who may become pregnant:

- **Get vaccinated.**
- **Prevent insect bites.**
- **Practice good hygiene.**
- **Talk to your healthcare provider.**

Women and their loved ones can follow these tips to promote a healthy pregnancy. Share your own tips for a healthy pregnancy using #Prevent2Protect on social media. Learn more at www.nbdpn.org.

January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month (250 words)

Birth defects are common, costly, and critical. In the United States, a baby is born with a birth defect every 4 ½ minutes leading to 120,000 babies affected each year. Birth defects are the most common cause of death in the first year of life and the second most common cause of death in children aged one to four years.

Although not all birth defects can be prevented, steps can be taken to increase a woman's chance of having a healthy baby. Some infections before and during pregnancy can increase the risk of birth defects and other health problems. Join the effort to raise awareness of birth defects by encouraging all women to **prevent infections for their baby's protection.**

Here are some helpful tips for pregnant women or women who may become pregnant:

Get vaccinated.

- Get the flu shot and whooping cough vaccine.
- Become up-to-date with all vaccines before getting pregnant.

Prevent insect bites.

- Use insect repellent.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outside.
- Consider avoiding travel to areas with Zika virus.

Practice good hygiene.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- Avoid putting a young child's cup or pacifier in your mouth.

Talk to your healthcare provider.

- Ask about how you can prevent infections, such as Zika virus.
- Discuss how to prevent sexually transmitted infections.

Women and their loved ones can follow these important tips to promote a healthy pregnancy. Share your own tips for a healthy pregnancy using #Prevent2Protect on social media. Learn more at www.nbdpn.org.

● Sample News Release ●

National Birth Defects Prevention Month 2018 – Prevent to Protect: Prevent Infections for Baby’s Protection

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 1, 2018

Contact: [**Name of person submitting release**]
[**Contact Phone Number**] – or – [**Contact Email**]

[**City, State**] – During January, National Birth Defects Prevention Month - 2018, [**Organization**] is joining with the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the March of Dimes, the Teratology Society and MotherToBaby to increase awareness of birth defects and how they can be prevented. During the 2018 campaign “**Prevent to Protect: Prevent Infections for Baby’s Protection**”, special emphasis is focused on the importance of preventing infections before and during pregnancy that can increase the risk of having a baby with a birth defect.

[**Organization**] is actively working to raise awareness of how common birth defects are and what steps can help to prevent them. In the United States, a baby is born with a birth defect every 4½ minutes - about 120,000 babies each year - with around [**prevalence information for your state**] cases occurring in [**State**]. Birth defects are the most common cause of death in the first year of life and the second most common cause of death in children aged one to four years.

Although not all birth defects can be prevented, many steps can be taken to increase a woman’s chance of having a healthy baby. It is important to prevent those infections that can increase the risk of birth defects and other health problems for mothers and babies.

Here are some helpful tips for pregnant women or women who may become pregnant:

Get vaccinated.

- Get the flu shot and the whooping cough vaccine.
- Become up-to-date with all vaccines before getting pregnant.

Prevent insect bites.

- Use insect repellent.
- Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outside.
- Consider avoiding travel to areas with Zika virus.

Practice good hygiene.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- Avoid putting a young child’s cup or pacifier in your mouth.

Talk to your healthcare provider.

- Ask about how you can prevent infections, such as Zika virus.
- Discuss how to prevent sexually transmitted infections.

In addition to following these tips to prevent infections, all women capable of becoming pregnant should eat a healthy diet, be physically active, and take a multivitamin with 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid every day whether they are currently planning a pregnancy or not. These steps can go a long way in promoting a healthy you and a healthy baby.

[**Organization**] is participating in National Birth Defects Prevention Month by [**include information about your local, state or national activities and provide pertinent contact information**].

[**Organization**] encourages you to be an active participant in National Birth Defects Prevention Month. Learn more by following “National Birth Defects Prevention Network” on Facebook and #Prevent2Protect on Twitter. The complete 2018 information packet, including this year’s theme, **Prevent to Protect: Prevent Infections for Baby’s Protection**, and other resources is available at: <https://www.nbdpn.org/bdpm.php>. Additional materials and resources are available at www.CDC.gov/ncbddd, www.marchofdimes.org, www.healthychildren.org, www.MotherToBaby.org and www.Teratology.org.

● Drop-In E-Articles Targeting Pediatric Healthcare Providers ●

January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month ([51 words](#))

In the United States, a baby is born with a birth defect every 4 ½ minutes. Some infections before and during pregnancy can hurt both mothers and their babies. Healthy behaviors can **prevent infections to protect babies**. These include getting vaccinated, preventing insect bites, and practicing good hygiene. Learn more: www.nbdpn.org

January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month ([75 words](#))

Birth defects are common, costly, and critical. Prevention of infections such as those caused by the flu, sexually transmitted diseases and infections carried by insects and animals are critical to reducing the risks for birth defects. Pediatricians can partner with families to **prevent infections to protect babies**. Talk with families about getting vaccinated, preventing insect bites, and practicing good hygiene. Learn more: www.nbdpn.org Share your own tips for healthy pregnancy using #Prevent2Protect on social media.

January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month ([196 words](#))

Birth defects are common, costly, and critical. Every 4 ½ minutes a baby is born with a birth defect in the United States. Pediatricians and other pediatric health care providers can be active participants in National Birth Defects Prevention Month by joining the nationwide effort to raise awareness of birth defects, their causes, and their impact.

Infections during pregnancy can hurt both mothers and their babies. Healthy choices and prevention strategies improve the chances that babies will be born healthy. Everyone can do their part to **prevent infections to protect babies** by observing the following guidelines:

- **Get vaccinated.**
Access resources to [prevent the flu](#).
- **Prevent insect bites.**
Stay abreast of developments in [congenital Zika virus](#) and support families in their [use of insect repellents](#).
- **Practice good hygiene.**
Reinforce [hand washing](#) to help prevent illness.
- **Talk to patients about prevention of infections.**
Access resources to prevent [sexually transmitted infections and other infections](#), such as [Zika virus](#).

Pediatricians and pediatric clinicians can participate in these strategies and take these important steps toward prevention of birth defects. Share your own tips for a healthy pregnancy using #Prevent2Protect on social media. Learn more at www.nbdpn.org.

● Sample Letter to Healthcare Providers ●

Dear Medical Professionals and Health Care Providers [*or individual's name*]:

January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month! Prevention of infections that can cause birth defects is the theme for 2018. The National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN), in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the March of Dimes, the American Academy of Pediatrics, Teratology Society and MotherToBaby, has put together a resource packet titled “**Prevent to Protect: Prevent Infections for Baby’s Protection**”. It is designed to raise awareness that some infections can cause birth defects, and that many of these infections are preventable.

This year [*“I”, “We”, or Organization’s name*] (am/are/is) encouraging you to work with your patients and the community to prevent current and future infections that can not only affect the patient’s health, but also cause birth defects in developing babies. The **Prevent to Protect** packet contains up-to-date, targeted information for professionals, their patients, and interested members of the general public.

The key messages this year are:

- **Get vaccinated.**
- **Prevent insect bites.**
- **Practice good hygiene.**
- **Talk to your healthcare provider.**

Medical professionals are a powerful part of this campaign by working to assure that all of their patients are up-to-date on their vaccinations against rubella, varicella and influenza. Additionally, making patients aware of effective ways to prevent, detect and treat infections they might be exposed to is a proactive way of preventing future birth defects.

Regardless of your specialty or the age group you serve, you are in a prime position to affect the occurrence of birth defects in the United States by reducing the risk of infections in your own patients and, thus, across the population. Ultimately, these efforts will lead to a healthier future for children and families, and reduce the personal and societal burden of disabilities and health care costs.

You can make a significant difference. (We/I) urge you to join (me/us) as an active participant this January in *National Birth Defects Prevention Month – 2018* and to continue your efforts throughout the year. You can access the **Prevent to Protect** packet online at: <http://www.nbdpn.org/bdpm.php>. All materials can be printed, copied electronically, or embedded in webpages and newsletters free of charge. Archives of past packets focusing on other measures for preventing birth defects are also available.

(I/we have a limited quantity of preprinted materials that you can request.) If (I/we) can help you or your patients further, please feel free to let (me/us) know how.

Sincerely,

[*Your own name if appropriate or Organization*]

● Fact Sheet for Policy Makers ●

Birth Defects Tracking, Research & Prevention

Tracking where and when birth defects occur and who they affect is a first step in preventing them. Tracking and research help us understand if the number of birth defects is increasing or decreasing over time, investigate possible causes, expand our understanding of preventive measures, and plan for health and education services for families of children with special needs.

Birth Defects: Common, Costly, and Critical

Common	Costly	Critical
1 in 33 babies	\$2.6 billion	1 in 5 deaths
Birth defects affect 1 in every 33 babies born in the United States. [Insert state numbers]	Each year, total hospital costs for U.S. children and adults exceed \$2.6 billion.	Birth defects cause 1 in every 5 deaths among babies in their first year of life.

Real Families, Real Stories

Meet Renee. Renee represents 1 in every 33 babies born in the United States. She was diagnosed with spina bifida, a birth defect which affects the spine, shortly after birth. Initially the diagnosis was difficult to comprehend and prepare for. However, her mother Venesha moved forward and learned how to best care for Renee. Venesha says, “[Renee] continues to succeed despite her challenges with spina bifida. While she has spina bifida... it does not define her. She’s a firecracker—so determined and fearless.”



Importance of Birth Defects Tracking and Research

The value of birth defects tracking programs on clinical and public health research cannot be overstated. This work has revolutionized the way researchers, clinicians, and healthcare professionals approach, treat, and manage babies affected by birth defects. Tracking and research help us understand if the number of birth defects is increasing or decreasing over time, investigate possible causes, expand our understanding of preventive measures, and plan for health and education services for families of children with special needs. Identifying birth defects at a state level also strengthens public health officials’ ability to estimate prevalence and evaluate risk factors that are most important to their community.

[State] Birth Defects Tracking System

Since [year], the [Birth Defect Monitoring Program] has monitored the prevalence of birth defects in [State]. The [Birth Defect Monitoring Program] is a [“statewide” or indicate monitoring region], population-based surveillance program with information on approximately [###] babies born with specific birth defects. The [Birth Defect Monitoring Program] was established to identify and describe the patterns and trends of birth defects in [State], provide education and outreach, investigate potential causes, and respond to community concerns about possible clusters of birth defects. These data are essential for understanding the impact of birth defects in [State].

● Educational Material for Men ●

**Dads play an important part in a healthy pregnancy.
You have a role in preventing infections for baby's protection.**

When David thought about his future and the dad he wanted to be, he made a commitment to himself to provide for his family as best he could. As he talked with his healthcare provider, he was reminded that his commitment to his family starts even before his children are born. Dads like David will contribute half of the biological building blocks for their children. Keeping himself healthy will help him pass along healthy genes and give his children their best chance at a healthy start.



Like David, you may be thinking about the family you may have one day. Here are some tips to help you prepare, get healthy and reduce the risk of infection for you and your partner.

- **Choose a healthy lifestyle.**
 - Incorporate healthy eating and regular physical activity into your daily routine.
 - Talk to your healthcare provider about fertility, weight management, or other health issues.
- **Avoid harmful substances.**
 - Protect yourself and your partner by quitting smoking and avoiding secondhand smoke and air pollution.
 - Do not drink excessively or use “street” drugs, such as cocaine or heroin.
- **Avoid harmful workplace exposures.**
 - Ask questions about hazards in your workplace. You have a legal right to receive information on hazards in your workplace.
 - Learn how to avoid bringing hazards home on your skin, clothes, and shoes.

Help your partner prepare by reminding her take these steps:

- **Get vaccinated.**
 - Get the flu shot and the whooping cough vaccine.
 - Become up-to-date with all vaccines to protect yourself and your partner before trying to become pregnant.
- **Protect yourself and your partner from insects known to carry diseases such as Zika virus.**
 - When mosquitos are active wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outside.
 - Use Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registered insect repellents with one of the following active ingredients: DEET, picaridin, IR3535, or oil of lemon eucalyptus (para-menthane-3, 8-diol). Help your partner spray or rub insect repellent into her skin.
 - Consider avoiding travel **to an area with Zika virus.**
- **Practice good hygiene.**
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water.
 - Avoid putting a young child's cup or pacifier in your mouth.
- **Talk to your healthcare provider.**
 - Talk to your healthcare provider about what you can do to prevent infections, such as Zika virus.
 - Talk to your healthcare provider about how to prevent sexually transmitted infections.

Appendix 1: Social Media Toolkit

Join the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN) this January to promote National Birth Defects Prevention Month using your social media networks. Use this toolkit to raise awareness about #Prevent2Protect and join the conversation about preventing birth defects. In this appendix, we have provided suggestions for using various social media platforms to promote National Birth Defects Prevention Month, including example posts and more!



Facebook

- Like [National Birth Defects Prevention Network's](#) page on Facebook. Like, share and comment.
- Tag [National Birth Defects Prevention Network](#) on your own posts.
- Share the Prevent to Protect badge (right), CDC social media buttons, or change your profile photo!

Twitter

- Follow [@NBDPN](#) and [@CDC_NCBDDD](#) on Twitter. Retweet, favorite, and comment.
- Use the #Prevent2Protect hashtag when sharing information, resources, photos or your own experiences.

Instagram

- Follow [@CDC](#)
- Post photos of how you are preventing infections. Ideas include photos of pregnant woman kissing child on forehead, wearing long sleeves and pants outside, using insect repellent, getting vaccines, talking to healthcare provider, washing hands with soap and water. Incorporate the hashtag #Prevent2Protect.
- Share your own #Prevent2Protect story of how birth defects affect you. Tag photos with #Prevent2Protect.

Examples of #Prevent2Protect Posts



We're partnering with @NBDPN to help women prevent infections and protect babies. #Prevent2Protect



How are you preventing infections to protect you and your baby? Share your tips with us! #Prevent2Protect

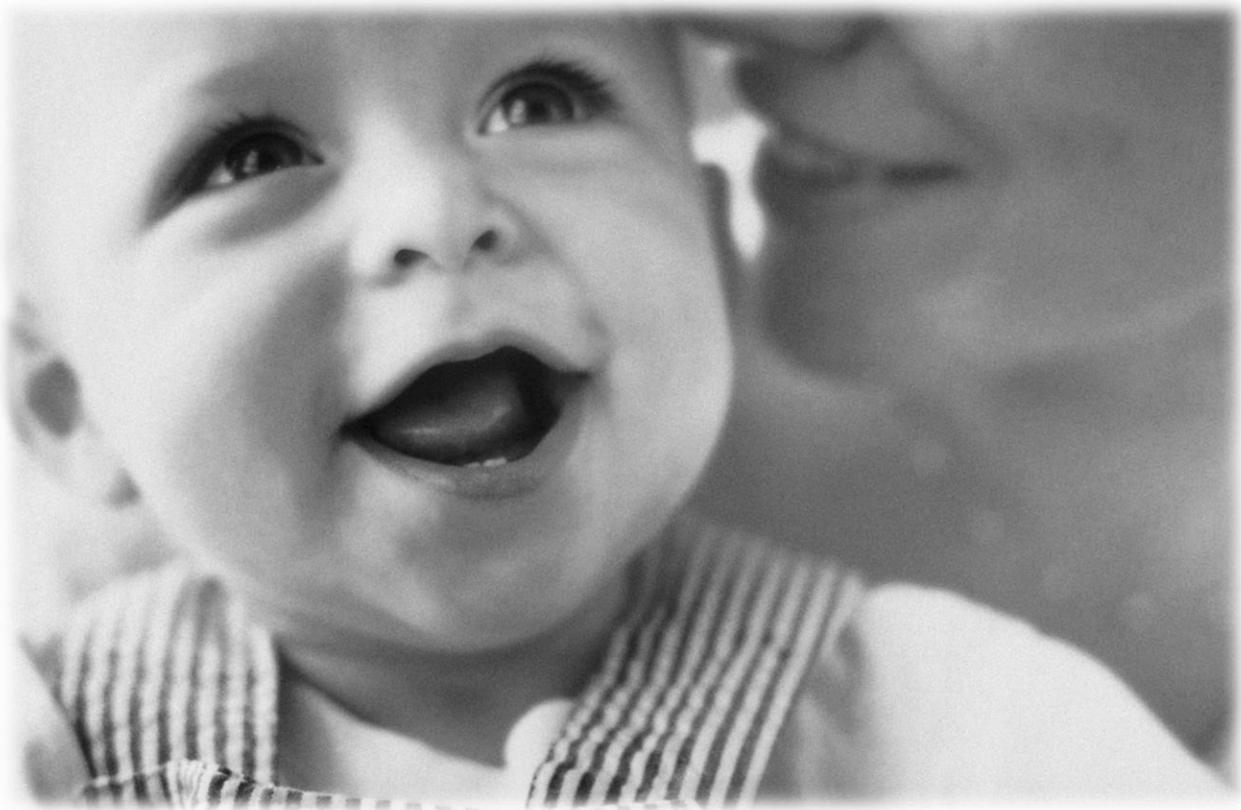


Appendix 2: Materials Adapted for Local Public Health Department

This appendix contains some of the materials from the 2018 National Birth Defects Prevention Month packet that have been adapted for use in raising birth defects awareness with local public health agencies. These materials supplement a more [comprehensive packet](#) that includes a sample news release, proclamation, provider letters, resources on the internet, and parent resources.

Local public health resource packet includes examples of:

- LPH1: Local public health announcement
- LPH2: Traditional letter to local public health agency administrators
- LPH3: Electronic letter to local public health agency staff
- LPH4: Brief awareness article
- LPH5: Awareness article for public health clinic newsletters
- LPH6: Announcement for electronic newsletters or listservs



LPH1: Sample local public health announcement

Plan ahead for January 2018 – Birth Defects Prevention Month!

The theme for 2018 is “Prevent to Protect: Prevent Infections for Baby’s Protection”. We encourage you to begin thinking about activities you can do in your agency or community to raise public awareness of the role infection before and during pregnancy plays in the development of birth defects.

The National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN) has developed a valuable packet of information. The materials raise awareness among health and public health professionals as well as the general public and include posters, sample communication tools and resource sheets. Some ideas for use of the packet to raise awareness include:

- Put posters up in your agency waiting rooms, even restrooms!
- Provide fact sheets and posters on the importance of using folic acid to prevent certain types of serious birth defects.
- Volunteer to present information on birth defects and birth defects prevention at a “lunch and learn” with your Maternal and Child Health (MCH) and Home Visiting Nurses and other agency staff.
- Supply pamphlets or fact sheets for patients and professionals in doctors’ offices and clinics in the community.

Electronic materials will be sent as soon as they are ready. Please contact [**Contact name**] if you would like more information.



LPH2: Sample traditional letter to local public health agency administrators

January 2018

MEMORANDUM

TO: Administrators, County Health Departments
District Nurse Managers *[Insert Other Recipients]*

FROM: *[Name]*
[Title]

About 120,000 babies are affected by birth defects each year in the United States. In *[State]*, approximately *[###]* babies are born with a birth defect each year. Not only can birth defects lead to lifelong challenges and disability, they are also the most common cause of death in infants and the second most common cause of death in children aged one to four years. I have included a state wide Birth Defects Profile for *[State]* (as well as a *[Region]* Birth Defects Profile) for your reference.

January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month. The theme for 2018 is “Prevent to Protect: Prevent Infections for Baby’s Protection”. We know that not all birth defects can be prevented. But, we also know that women can increase their chances of having a healthy baby by managing health conditions and adopting healthy behaviors before and during pregnancy. Some infections before and during pregnancy can hurt both you and your baby. They can cause birth defects and lifelong disabilities, such as hearing loss or learning problems. You can reduce your risk of getting an infection during pregnancy to help protect your baby by following the subsequent recommendations:

- **Get vaccinated.**
 - Get the flu shot and the whooping cough vaccine.
 - Become up-to-date with all vaccines before getting pregnant.
- **Prevent insect bites.**
 - Use insect repellent. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registered insect repellents with one of the following active ingredients: DEET, picaridin, IR3535, or oil of lemon eucalyptus (para-menthane-3,8-diol) is most effective.
 - Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outside.
 - Consider avoiding travel to areas with Zika virus.
- **Practice good hygiene.**
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water.
 - Avoid putting a young child’s cup or pacifier in your mouth.
- **Talk to your healthcare provider.**
 - Ask about how you can prevent infections, such as Zika virus.
 - Discuss how to prevent sexually transmitted infections.

You can make a difference in the lives of *[State]* families. Please review the materials in the attached packet and use them to raise public awareness of birth defects. We invite you to share these resources with coworkers, colleagues, staff, and others who might benefit from this information.

Thank you for your support. If you have any questions or would like additional materials, please contact me or *[Contact]* by phone at *[XXX-XXX-XXXX]* or by email *[Email]*.

LPH3: Sample electronic letter to local public health agency staff

Dear **[public health nurses/practitioners/clinic staff/etc.]**,

The **[name of state health department – hyperlinked to website]** is joining the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN) to raise awareness of birth defects and to promote strategies that reduce the risk of birth defects and their complications. The theme for 2018 is “Prevent to Protect: Prevent Infections for Baby’s Protection”. We hope that you will join us in promoting National Birth Defects Prevention Month and raising awareness of birth defects as a public health issue in your communities. Governor **[name of Governor]** has also proclaimed the month of January 2018 as Birth Defects Prevention Month **[hyperlink to state proclamation]**. I invite you to share the attached resources with coworkers, colleagues, local public health staff, and others who might benefit from this information.

Birth defects affect 1 in every 33 babies born in the United States and are a leading cause of infant mortality. Babies who survive and live with birth defects are at an increased risk for developing many lifelong physical, cognitive, and social challenges. Medical care and support services only scrape the surface of the financial and emotional impact of living with birth defects. We know that not all birth defects can be prevented. But, we also know that women can increase their chances of having a healthy baby by managing health conditions and adopting healthy behaviors before becoming pregnant. Please encourage all pregnant women and those who may become pregnant to:

- **Get vaccinated.**
 - Get the flu shot and the whooping cough vaccine.
 - Become up-to-date with all vaccines before getting pregnant.
- **Prevent insect bites.**
 - Use insect repellent. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registered insect repellents with one of the following active ingredients: DEET, picaridin, IR3535, or oil of lemon eucalyptus (para-menthane-3,8-diol) is most effective.
 - Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outside.
 - Consider avoiding travel to areas with Zika virus.
- **Practice good hygiene.**
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water.
 - Avoid putting a young child's cup or pacifier in your mouth.
- **Talk to your healthcare provider.**
 - Ask about how you can prevent infections, such as Zika virus.
 - Discuss how to prevent sexually transmitted infections.

The **[name of state birth defects program – hyperlink to birth defects program website]** website contains information, resources, and links to free educational materials from **[name of state health department]**, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN). We encourage you to use these materials to raise awareness of the ways birth defects can be prevented among health professionals and the general public in your community. You have the power to make a difference. We urge you to join us as an active participant in *National Birth Defects Prevention Month - 2018* and to continue your efforts throughout the year.

LPH4: Sample awareness article (brief)

January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month

Prevent to Protect – *Prevent Infections for Baby's Protection*

The **[name of state/local]** Department of Health is joining the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN) and the **[State]** March of Dimes to raise awareness of birth defects and to promote strategies that reduce the risk of birth defects and their complications. Join us in promoting National Birth Defects Prevention Month!

Birth defects affect 1 in every 33 babies born in the United States and are a leading cause of infant mortality. Babies who survive and live with birth defects are at an increased risk for developing many lifelong physical, cognitive, and social challenges.

Although not all birth defects can be prevented, all women who could become pregnant or are pregnant can lower their risk of having babies with birth defects by following some basic health guidelines throughout their reproductive years. These include:

- **Get vaccinated.**
 - Get the flu shot and the whooping cough vaccine.
 - Become up-to-date with all vaccines before getting pregnant.
- **Prevent insect bites.**
 - Use insect repellent. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registered insect repellents with one of the following active ingredients: DEET, picaridin, IR3535, or oil of lemon eucalyptus (para-menthane-3,8-diol) is most effective.
 - Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outside.
 - Consider avoiding travel to areas with Zika virus.
- **Practice good hygiene.**
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water.
 - Avoid putting a young child's cup or pacifier in your mouth.
- **Talk to your healthcare provider.**
 - Ask about how you can prevent infections, such as Zika virus.
 - Discuss how to prevent sexually transmitted infections.

January is a perfect time to call additional attention to the importance of folic acid in preventing certain birth defects. The United States Public Health Service recommends that all women of childbearing age consume 400 micrograms (400mcg or .4mg) of folic acid daily to prevent up to 50 - 70% of neural tube defects, such as spina bifida and anencephaly.

The **[name of State Birth Defects Program]** has resource materials available on their website to assist you in raising awareness of birth defects as a public health issue in your clinic and communities. Materials include the NBDPN resource packet that can be tailored to meet your specific needs, sample partner and provider letters, a proclamation of the month, as well as links to resources for parents and other interested in learning more about birth defects.

For more information, contact **[insert name and email]**

LPH5: Sample awareness article for public health clinic newsletters

January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month

The [State] Department of Health is joining the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN) to raise awareness of birth defects and to promote strategies that can reduce the risk of birth defects and their complications. This year's theme is "Prevent to Protect: Prevent Infections for Baby's Protection". Although not all birth defects can be prevented, the healthcare community can help all women, including teens, who could become pregnant or are pregnant to lower their risk of having babies with birth defects by encouraging them to follow some basic health guidelines throughout their reproductive years:

- **Get vaccinated.**
 - Get the flu shot and the whooping cough vaccine.
 - Become up-to-date with all vaccines before getting pregnant.
- **Prevent insect bites.**
 - Use insect repellent. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registered insect repellents with one of the following active ingredients: DEET, picaridin, IR3535, or oil of lemon eucalyptus (para-menthane-3,8-diol) is most effective.
 - Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when outside.
 - Consider avoiding travel to areas with Zika virus.
- **Practice good hygiene.**
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water.
 - Avoid putting a young child's cup or pacifier in your mouth.
- **Talk to your healthcare provider.**
 - Ask about how you can prevent infections, such as Zika virus.
 - Discuss how to prevent sexually transmitted infections.

January is a perfect time to call additional attention to the importance of folic acid in preventing certain birth defects. The United States Public Health Service recommends that all women of childbearing age consume 400 micrograms (400mcg or .4mg) of folic acid daily to prevent up to 50 - 70% of neural tube defects, such as spina bifida and anencephaly.

You can make a difference in the lives of [State] families. Additional resources can be found on the NBDPN website. If you have questions or would like more information, please contact [name and email].

LPH6: Sample announcement for electronic newsletters or listservs

January is National Birth Defects Prevention Month and January 7-13 is Folic Acid Awareness Week

The [name of state health department – hyperlinked to website] is joining the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN) to raise awareness of birth defects and to promote strategies that reduce the risk of birth defects and their complications. We hope that you will join us in promoting National Birth Defects Prevention Month! This year's theme is "Prevent to Protect: Prevent Infections for Baby's Protection". We know that not all birth defects can be prevented. However, we encourage all women to make healthy choices and adopt healthy habits to help lower their risk of having a baby born with a birth defect. Please encourage all pregnant women and those who may become pregnant to follow the recommended guidelines to reduce their chance of developing an infection before or during their pregnancy.

The [name of state birth defects program - hyperlink to birth defects program website] has resource materials available on their website to assist you in raising awareness of birth defects as a public health issue in your clinic and communities. Materials include the NBDPN resource packet and [State] resource packet that can be tailored to meet your specific needs. These materials contain sample partner and provider letters, a proclamation of the month, as well as links to resources for parents and other interested in learning more about birth defects and infections during pregnancy.

Folic Acid Awareness Week, January 7-13, is a perfect time to call additional attention to the importance of folic acid in preventing certain birth defects. The United States Public Health Service recommends that *all* women of childbearing age consume 400 micrograms (400mcg or .4mg) of folic acid daily to prevent up to 50 - 70% of neural tube defects, such as spina bifida and anencephaly. To learn more about Folic Acid Awareness Week go to <http://www.nbdpn.org/faaw.php>.

For more information, contact [name and email].

To access our resources online visit: www.nbdpn.org