

Recognizing National Birth Defects Awareness Month



What you can do to protect your baby.

Did You Know?

▼
The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that birth defects affect about **1 in 33 babies born** every year in the United States.

▼
Birth defects are **physical changes in a newborn baby**. They can develop in almost any part of the body, including the heart, brain, face, feet, arms and spine.

▼
The severity of a birth defect **determines how it impacts your baby's ability to function**. It can also shorten lifespan.



Common birth defects include:

- Spina bifida (a spine defect)
- Cleft lip or cleft palate (facial deformity)
- Narrowing of the aorta (a heart defect)
- Hearing loss
- Down syndrome

According to the CDC, risk factors for birth defects include:

- The mother having health conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, or anxiety and depression
- Taking certain medications, such as isotretinoin use for acne treatment
- Smoking
- Infections, including cytomegalovirus or Zika virus
- Age of the mother, due to the increased risk of chromosomal abnormalities



What you can do:

- Visit your healthcare provider before getting pregnant to identify risk factors.
- Eat a healthy diet with plenty of green leafy veggies and other foods with folate.
- Take folic acid, which is essential for your baby's healthy development.
- Exercise regularly.
- Consult your provider before taking medications.
- Stay up-to-date on routine vaccines.

Concerned about your pregnancy?
Find a provider: weillcornell.org/doctors