



Berrien County Health Department:
Preventing Disease,
Prolonging Life and
Protecting the
Health of the



Folic Acid & Inter-Conception Care Awareness

What you need to know about Folic Acid:

Folic acid, a B vitamin, helps prevent birth defects of the brain and spinal cord when taken very early in pregnancy. It is available in most multivitamins, as a folic-only supplement and in some foods.

Some studies suggest that folic acid may also protect women and men from stroke, heart disease, cervical and colon cancer and possibly breast cancer.



January 7-13, 2008, is **National Folic Acid Awareness Week**. For more information, visit www.marchofdimes.com or call 1-888-MODIMES

What you can do:

Take a multivitamin with 400 micrograms of folic acid every day before pregnancy and during early pregnancy, as part of a healthy diet.

Eat a healthy diet that includes foods that contain folate, the natural form of the vitamin. Such foods include breakfast cereals, dried beans, leafy green vegetables and orange juice.

If you have already had a pregnancy affected by a birth defect of the brain or spinal cord, ask your health care provider how much folic acid you need. Studies have shown that taking a larger dose of folic acid daily can reduce the risk of having another affected pregnancy. The larger dose needs to be taken at least one month before pregnancy and in the first trimester

of pregnancy. The recommended dose is 4 milligrams (4,000 micrograms).

Data from Vital Records shows that eleven communities in Michigan (**Berrien County being one of the 11 communities identified**) have significant numbers of black infant deaths and large differences between white and black infant mortality (death) rates. The targeted communities represent more than 90% of Michigan's black births and approximately 98% of black infant deaths.

In an effort to prevent infant deaths and poor birth outcomes, Berrien County is introducing a prevention-based strategy called **"Inter-Conception Care"** to females residing in zip codes 49022 & 49023. Inter-Conception Care means that a woman who has had a prior poor pregnancy outcome is identified and provided services to reduce her risks before she becomes pregnant again.

Inter-conception Care

Inter-Conception Care Is:

A new program sponsored by the Raising Up Healthy Babies Taskforce in Berrien County for women who have either had an infant death or a premature baby. The goal of this program is to increase the number of women who have an inter-pregnancy interval (spaced birth) of 18-24 months.

Researchers found that infants born to women who conceived (got pregnant) less than six months after giving birth had a 40% increased risk for being born prematurely and a 61%

increased risk of low birth weight, compared with infants born to mothers who waited 18 months to two years between pregnancies.



Inter-Conception Care services

provided by professional staff include (but are not limited to): bereavement (grief counseling) support to women who have lost a fetus or infant, assessment of risks for preterm or low birth weight pregnancy outcome and facilitated planning for the next pregnancy by encouraging actions to improve the woman's health status.

If you are interested or know of anyone else that is interested in more information about any of these topics our Inter-Conception Program Coordinator can help!

Special thanks to Fatimah Mitchell for her help with this article!

The Berrien County Health Department has five locations to serve you:

Benton Harbor

769 Pipestone
P.O. Box 706
926-7121

M-139 Office

2106 S. M-139
927-5623

School Based

870 Colfax Ave
925-4500

Niles

1205 N. Front St.
684-2800

Three Oaks

21 N. Elm
756-2008

Or visit us on the web at www.berriencohlthdept.org

Healthy Beginnings

January is Healthy Beginnings month. This month, the health department will bring you information about topics to begin the new year healthy, including WIC, Interconception Care, Breast Feeding, and Family Planning. For questions about any of these topics, please call the health department at **926-7121**.

Are You.....

A female age 15 to 44

Do You.....

- Reside in zip codes 49022 or 49023
- Have no more than two living children
- Desire to get pregnant within the next 24 months

Have You....

Had a miscarriage, preterm birth, fetal or infant loss in the last six months

Did Your....

Last baby weigh less than 5lbs. 8oz

Consider Giving Your Next Baby His or Her 1st gift...

A Healthy Start

Just Call Us—It's Absolutely Free. Contact Fatimah Mitchell for more information.

927-5663



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