



Birth Defects



FACTS

- About 150,000 babies are born each year with birth defects.
- The parents of one out of every 28 babies receive the frightening news that their baby has a birth defect
- There are over 4,000 known birth defects
- Birth defects are the leading cause of death in the first year of life

What is a Birth Defect?

- An abnormality of structure, function or body metabolism (inborn error of body chemistry) present at birth that results in physical or mental disability or is fatal.



What causes birth defects?

- Both genetic and environmental factors can cause birth defect. However, the causes of about 60% of birth defects are currently unknown.
- A single abnormal gene can cause birth defects. Every human being has about 100,000 genes that determine traits like eye color, hair, etc.



Can birth defects be prevented?

- Visit a health care provider for a pre-pregnancy check up. Especially if a woman has health problems
- When pregnant take daily multivitamin containing 400 mg of the B-vitamin folic Acid
- Avoid alcohol, drugs, smoking,
- Avoid prescription or over-the-counter medication without checking with a health care provider.



Factors that contribute to Birth Defects:


- Mother is Overweight
- Mother is Underweight
- Last birth was less than 12 month ago
- Has had a baby that weighed less than 3 ½ pounds
- Has had 3 or more miscarriages
- Has had more than 5 pregnancies



A vertical strip of four images showing a baby's hand and foot. The top two images show a baby's hand with fingers slightly curled. The bottom two images show a baby's foot being held by an adult's hand.

More Factors

- Has had a still born baby
- Drinks alcohol
- Uses prescription drugs
- Has used street drugs
- Drinks high amounts of caffeine
- Has had exposure to chemicals
- Constant exposure to cats
- Has had x-rays during pregnancy



Can birth defects be diagnosed before birth?

- Some prenatal tests that can be taken are:
 - Ultrasound
 - Amniocentesis
 - Chronic villus sampling



Can birth defects be treated before birth?

- Advances in prenatal therapy now make it possible to treat some birth defects before birth.
- Prenatal surgery – urinary-tract blockages, rare tumors in the lungs, spina bifida, ph disease,