January is the month of National Birth Defects Prevention. This year the theme is “Best for You. Best for Baby”. Many birth defects are not avoidable; however, some birth defects can be prevented by taking care of yourself before and during pregnancy.¹

What can you do to reduce the risk? You can reduce the chance that your baby will have a birth defect by: maintaining healthy habits before and during pregnancy, paying attention to nutrition, keeping up-to-date with your vaccinations, and by avoiding alcohol, tobacco, and medications with unknown risks factors during pregnancy.

Maintaining a healthy diet requires more attention during pregnancy. Your growing baby increase your nutritional needs. How can you be sure you are getting all the vitamins, minerals, and protein that are required to manage the needs of both you and your baby? You may consider prenatal vitamin supplements that can protect your health and protect your baby from birth defects.

Folic acid is a B vitamin that the body uses to build new cells. Folic acid can prevent birth defects of the brain and spine (anencephaly and spina bifida) when consumed in proper quantities before and during pregnancy.

How much Folic Acid do I need to take? Generally women of reproductive age need 400 mcg of folic acid every day. If you are pregnant, talk with your doctor to be sure you are getting the proper dosage and supplements.

What foods have are good sources for Folic Acid? Folic Acids are found in some breads, cereals, and corn masa flour. To be sure how much folic acid is available in food items, review the Nutritional Fact Label on most food items. To ensure you are getting enough folic acid, you can take vitamins and eat foods fortified with folic acid to get enough to protect your baby’s health. More information regarding folic acid can be found on the Center for Disease Control and Prevention website, key word folic acid².

Keeping up-to-date with routine vaccinations can help prevent serious illness and protect your baby form birth defects related to disease. Make sure you get the annual flu vaccination and a vaccination for whooping cough or pertussis (the Tdap vaccination) with each pregnancy.

Maintain a healthy weight and staying fit can help prevent birth defects, and prevent maternal high blood pressure, gestational diabetes, preeclampsia, and cesarean delivery³. Obesity during pregnancy can trigger lifelong maternal struggles with weight control. Additionally, obesity during pregnancy can trigger metabolic changes in the fetus precipitating a tendency for obesity that can be passed on to future offspring.

Avoiding Alcohol, tobacco and drugs during pregnancy can prevent the onset of Fetal Alcohol syndrome causing irreversible brain damage and growth problems⁴. Avoiding tobacco during pregnancy can prevent cardiac disease, problems with the placenta that can contribute to miscarriage, and premature birth. Always check with your doctor or obstetrician before taking any medication to determine if the medication is counter indicated during pregnancy.

Every year nearly 500 deaths related to complications in pregnancy occur⁵. Prenatal Care can be instrumental in monitoring the progression of the pregnancy, and screening for immunity to high risk communicable and genetic diseases; as well as, other health concerns that can affect the mother and the fetus. During prenatal care the mother receives advice about smoking, drinking alcohol, eating a healthy diet, maintaining a proper weight during and after pregnancy, and preparing for the birth.

Birth defects and pregnancy complications can be prevented by seeking out medical care before and during pregnancy and by maintaining health nutrition, maintain your weight, and healthy exercise routines. For more information visit the website listed below or contact your doctor.

References:
Fit for Duty 5K Fun Run
Date/Time: Jan. 19, 8 a.m.
Location: Jimmy Brought Fitness Center
Shed the holiday pounds and get fit for duty at the JBSA-Fort Sam Houston Jimmy Brought Fitness Center Fit for Duty 5K Fun Run. Participants meet directly behind the fitness center, building 520. This free event is open to all Department of Defense ID cardholders, family and guests as well as pets. For more information, call 210-221-1234.

Idea Public Schools 5k and healthy living expo
When: Sat., Jan. 26, 8:30 a.m.-12 p.m.
Price: $10-$20
www.ideapublicschools.org/5K

Where: Lady Bird Johnson Park
10700 Nacogdoches, San Antonio San Antonio TX 78217

Winter Fitness Hike
When: Sat., Jan. 5, 10 a.m.-12 p.m.
Phone: (210) 207-3782
Price: $3 Suggested Donation
www.fosana.org

Feel the calming effect of nature with a two-hour fitness hike along Main Loop and Vista Loop trails at Friedrich Wilderness Park. This hike will cover approximately 2 miles of picturesque trails across canyon tops and through meadows and woodlands.

Vogel Resiliency Center
JBSA-Ft. Sam Houston, Stanley Rd. Bldg. 367

- Family Life Program:
  Ph: 210.221.0349 & 221.1505
- Wellness Center:
  Ph: 210.539.1254
- Substance Abuse & Suicide Awareness:
  Ph: 210.221.0326 & 221.2093
- Nutrition Coaching:
  Ph: 210.539.1275
- Teaching Kitchen:
  Ph: 210.808.0077
- Personal Finance Counseling:
  Ph: 210.221.9198
- Public Health Nursing:
  Ph: 210.916.7646
- Family Life Chaplain:
  Ph: 210.808.0541 & 221.9445
- Ready & Resiliency Performance Center:
  Ph: 210.808.0086 & 808.0089

Tobacco Cessation Program
Program Eligibility: Open to all TRICARE beneficiaries.
Please call JBSA-FSH Army Health Promotion at 210.916.7646 for class schedules and to enroll.

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This free Monthly Yoga class firmly believes in the importance of balanced minds and balanced bodies, making sure yoga isn’t confined to only these classes and or in a studio. The class aims to see fitness as an overall sense of wellbeing that builds upon a sense of community.