



Charlie Crist
Governor

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State Surgeon General

PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Preventing Infections in Pregnancy
January is Birth Defects Prevention Month

Are you or someone you love pregnant or thinking about getting pregnant? You can prevent infection and help keep your unborn baby safe from birth defects. Here's how:

1. Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially when...

- Using the bathroom
- Touching pets
- Touching raw meat, raw eggs or unwashed vegetables
- Being around people who are sick
- Getting saliva (spit) on your hands
- Preparing food and eating it
- Caring for and playing with children
- Gardening or touching dirt or soil
- Changing diapers

NOTE: If soap and running water are not available, you may use alcohol-based hand gel.

2. Try not to share forks, cups or food with young children. Wash your hands often when around children. Their saliva and urine might contain a virus or germs. This can be dangerous for you and your unborn baby.

3. Cook meat until it's well done. The juice should run clear and there should be no pink inside. Undercooked meat and processed meat might contain harmful germs or bacteria.

4. Avoid unpasteurized (raw) milk and food made from it. Do not eat soft cheese such as feta, brie and queso fresco unless they have labels that say they are pasteurized. Unpasteurized (raw) products can contain harmful germs and bacteria.

5. Do not touch or change dirty cat litter. Have someone else do it. If you must change the litter yourself, be sure to wear gloves and wash your hands afterwards. Dirty cat litter might contain a harmful parasite.

6. Stay away from wild or pet rodents and their droppings. Have a pest control company get rid of pests in or around your home. If you have a pet rodent, like a hamster or guinea pig, have someone else take care of it until after your baby arrives. Some rodents might carry harmful germs or a virus.

7. Get tested for sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV, and protect yourself from them. Some people who have an STD do not feel sick. Knowing whether or not you have an STD is important. If you do have an STD, talk to your doctor about how you can reduce the chance that your baby will become sick.

(MORE)



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8. Talk to your doctor about vaccinations (shots). Some are recommended before you become pregnant, during pregnancy or right after delivery. Getting the right vaccinations at the right time can help keep you healthy and help keep your baby from getting very sick or having life-long health problems.

9. Avoid people who are sick. Stay away from people who you know have infections, such as chickenpox, if you have not had the disease yourself or did not have the vaccine before pregnancy.

Did You Know?

- Birth defects are the leading cause of death in children less than one year of age – causing one in every five deaths. In fact, 18 babies die every day in the U.S. as the result of a birth defect. Defects of the heart and limbs are the most common kinds of birth defects. Birth defects are a serious problem.
- All women who could get pregnant should get 400 micrograms of folic acid every day to help prevent some types of serious birth defects – even before they are pregnant. Folic acid is a vitamin that can reduce the risk of birth defects of the brain and spine.

To find out about birth defects, prenatal care or taking care of yourself before you have a baby, please visit the Pinellas County Health Department health center nearest you or call our main center at (727) 824-6990.

You may also want to visit www.marchofdimes.com or <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/>

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