



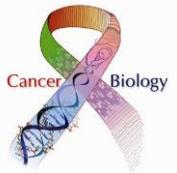
## January - Good Month to Look Ahead

A new year, a new chance to make needed changes in our lives that can benefit us and others around us. They say that the definition of insanity is trying to do the same thing over and over and expecting a different result each time. Well, does that apply to you? Think about your life situation. Is there anything that needs a change or a re-do? Are you doing the very best possible for your health and well being? After all, our health is what gets us through to a longer, better life. Yes, there may be “treatments” that can help if we become “unhealthy”, but the best bet by far is everyday work toward being healthy - prevention. Prevention does work!

A January health observance that encourages a “preventative action” is **Cervical Health Awareness month**. All females and the males that care about them should know about the steps that can be taken to prevent cervical cancer. Every woman, if she has not already done so, should speak with her health care provider about preventing cervical cancer. Each year more than 12,000 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer in the U.S., with more than 4000 dying of the disease. These rates have been linked with poverty and lack of access to medical care. With everyone able to have access to health insurance now, these rates are totally unnecessary. Screening tests like the Pap test and HPV tests and new vaccines can help to eliminate the disease, if accessed by those who need them. Shyness should not be a barrier to good health care either. Take the needed steps to prevent cancer!



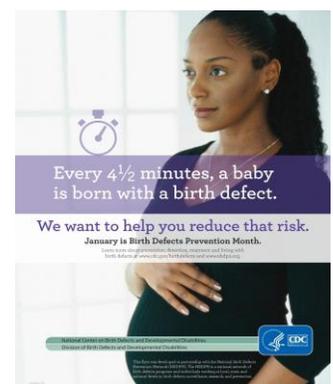
Parents should talk with their children’s health care provider about the **HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) vaccine**. **Both girls and boys should plan to have this series of vaccinations** upon reaching the age of 11 and up to 26, since HPV is a cause of cervical cancer. The vaccine will help both girls and boys develop immunity to this virus and prevent the subsequent infection the virus causes that can lead to cervical, oral, anal, and throat cancers. Step up and do what is needed for better health!



In January we observe “**National Birth Defects Prevention Month**”. Imagine the joy and amazement of having a new little life come into your family, only to face the great sadness of the baby having some kind of birth defect that can alter the life of this little one. To compound this grief, what if something could have been done differently to prevent a birth defect from occurring in the first place. Sometimes this does happen. Actually, birth defects are common and can be very costly and critical to the child’s life. All women of child bearing years can increase their chances of having a healthy baby by doing some preventatives:

Make a **PACT** –

- **P**lan ahead
- **A**void harmful substances
- **C**hoose a healthy lifestyle
- **T**alk to your doctor



## For all Yates County employees and area residents

By planning ahead for a pregnancy, a woman should take steps to become as healthy as possible before a pregnancy occurs. Not all birth defects can be prevented, but women can definitely lower their risk of having a baby with a birth defect by following some basic steps with their own health.



- **Prior to becoming pregnant, a woman should talk with her health care provider** about her state of health and what can be done to improve it for a “reproductive life plan”. One very important step is to make sure she has **folic acid** in her nutritional intake every day. Folic acid is a vitamin that helps prevent birth defects and can be added with a multivitamin or by eating fortified foods. Folic acid helps prevent birth defects of the baby’s brain or spine.
- If you are planning a pregnancy or learn you are pregnant, avoid all **alcoholic beverages**. There is no level of alcohol in your system that is considered safe for an unborn baby. This is also the case for **tobacco use and any other substances** a woman may use. The baby is vulnerable to any outside substances the mother may come in contact with. It is important to talk with your health care provider to lower the unborn baby’s risk from damaging substances, including medications that are prescribed or over-the-counter.
- A woman should **share her family’s medical history with her health care provider** and that of the baby’s father in order to help the doctor identify possible diseases that could put the baby at risk.
- Women of child bearing years should make every effort to **eat a healthy diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole-grained foods, low-fat dairy products, lean proteins, and healthy fats and oils**.
- The **importance of regular exercise** that elevates the heart rate cannot be forgotten. Exercise is vital to people at every age. Our bodies are meant to move. Being stationary for any length of time is not good for us.

To learn more about birth defects and how you can help prevent them, go to:

[www.nbdpn.org/bdpm2015.php](http://www.nbdpn.org/bdpm2015.php).

Winter is the very best time of year to test your home for **radon** because the building is closed up for cold weather, trapping any gas inside; and yes, we do have radon in this area of New York state. **Radon is a colorless, odorless gas that seeps into structures through cracks and crevices in the foundation. It is a product of the breakdown of uranium in the earth’s crust.** Radon gas rises to the earth’s surface and enters a building, seeping into living areas where it can slowly poison residents over time. In fact, radon is the leading cause of lung cancer deaths in the U.S. for people who do not smoke. Each year about 21,000 Americans die due to exposure to radon gas. Since exposure to radon gas is a “preventable” health risk, there are steps that can be taken to safeguard your family’s health.



- **Test your home for radon.** The EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) and the U.S. Surgeon General recommend that all homes in the U.S. be tested. Test kits are easy to use and inexpensive and available at most hardware and home stores.
- **Place a test kit in a living area of your home** for a set amount of time, then send it by mail for examination. The results will be returned with an explanation of your level of exposure. If there is a risk to your health, you should contact someone who has been certified by the state to remediate your home. Go to the NYS website to learn more: <http://www.health.ny.gov/environmental/radiological/radon/radon.htm>
- If in the market to purchase a home, ask the realtor for radon test results, or if building a new home, hire a builder who uses “radon-resistant new construction practices”.

