

# Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Birth Defects Activities

## Birth Defects Basic Facts

- In the United States, about 3% of all babies are born with a major birth defect.
- Birth defects are the leading cause of infant mortality accounting for more than 20% of all infant deaths.
- Children with birth defects who survive may experience lifelong physical and mental disabilities, and are at increased risk for developing other health problems.
- According to CDC the lifetime economic cost of caring for infants born each year with any of the 17 most common birth defects exceeds \$6 billion annually.

## Research

The National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities (NCBDDD) is funding the largest case-control study of birth defects ever conducted -- the National Birth Defects Prevention Study. The nine regional centers located in MA, NY, NC, GA, TX, AR, IA, UT and CA participating in the Study identify infants with major birth defects; interview mothers about medical history, environmental exposures, and lifestyle before and during pregnancy; and collect DNA samples to study gene-environment interactions. With nearly 11 years worth of data and samples collected, and \$85 million invested in this study, it is a rich source of information on possible causes of birth defects.

**After several years of eroding funding, it is critical to provide a \$3 million increase for the National Birth Defects Prevention Study in FY 2009. Without this increase CDC will be unable to maintain operation of all the Centers of Excellence and will also not be able to conduct analyses of genetic samples.**

## Surveillance

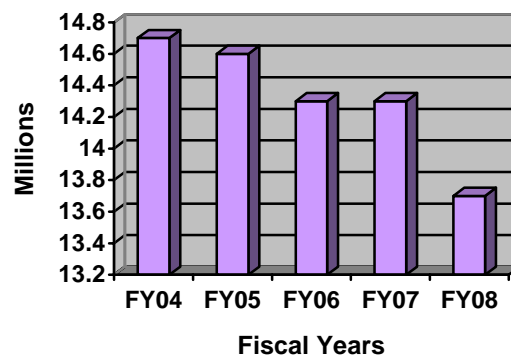
The NCBDDD also provides funding to assist states with community-based birth defects surveillance systems, programs to prevent birth defects, and to improve access to health services for children with birth defects. Surveillance is the backbone of a vital, functional and responsive public health network.

## Prevention

The daily consumption of the vitamin folic acid has been shown to significantly reduce serious birth defects, such as spina bifida and anencephaly. Since fortification of U.S. enriched grain products with folic acid, the rate of those birth defects has decreased by 26%. Unfortunately, according to a recent CDC analysis, 60 percent of American women of childbearing age are not consuming the recommended amount of folic acid. To achieve the full prevention potential of folic acid, CDC's national public and health professions education campaign must be expanded.

**A \$2 million increase for the Folic Acid Education Campaign is needed to enable CDC to inform more women, particularly nonpregnant Hispanic women and women age 18-24, as well as healthcare providers about the benefits of folic acid.**

Birth Defects Funding



For more information contact Emil Wigode or Carolyn Mullen,  
March of Dimes Office of Government Affairs (202)659-1800