The March of Dimes North Carolina Preconception Health Campaign is participating in National Women’s Health Week (NWHW), a weeklong health observance coordinated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Office on Women’s Health. The week starts on Mother’s Day, May 13, and continues until May 19. This year the Campaign is focusing on the importance of health behaviors and preventative care that can lead to healthier lives for women.

“National Women’s Health Week is important because it encourages women to take time for their health,” said Amy Mullenix, MSW, MSPH, Statewide Coordinator of the Campaign. “Women are often so busy with the obligations of their careers or families that as a result, they forget to make their own health a priority. With National Women’s Health Week, we remind women that they need to visit the doctor, make sure their screenings are up-to-date, get active and just take time to think about their health and their future.”

One way the Campaign is participating in NWHW is by encouraging women to see their health care provider for an annual wellness checkup. Regular checkups are vital to the early detection of heart disease, diabetes, cancer, mental health illnesses, sexually transmitted infections, and other conditions. It is especially important for women of childbearing age to see their health care providers regularly to discuss their pregnancy intentions and possible behaviors and risk factors that could affect future pregnancies. This kind of care is called preconception health care.

Preconception health care is defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as care given to a woman before pregnancy to manage conditions and behaviors which could be a risk to her or her baby. There is evidence to show that the healthier women are prior to pregnancy, the better their chances are for having a good birth outcome. In North Carolina about 44 percent of pregnancies are unintended, which means that those women didn’t have time to get healthy prior to pregnancy. The quality and amount of prenatal care women receive, while important, sometimes isn’t enough to overcome the risk factors that they had entering pregnancy.

That is why all women of childbearing age should take steps today to improve their health and the health of their future children. Some of these health behaviors include: taking a multivitamin with folic acid every day; getting to or maintaining a healthy weight; being active for at least 30 minutes most days; reducing stress and getting mentally healthy; stopping smoking and illicit drug use; avoiding excessive drinking; and choosing an effective form of birth control to prevent pregnancy.

Health care providers can also take an active role in promoting preconception health. The March of Dimes North Carolina Preconception Health Campaign uses the Office Champion Program to train health care providers on preconception health topics they can share with their patients. As a part of National Women’s Health Week, the Campaign will be offering two free webinars to reach out to providers and public health professionals. Details about the webinars and the Office Champion program can be found on our website at everywomannc.com.

The March of Dimes North Carolina Preconception Health Campaign is a statewide initiative aimed at improving birth outcomes in North Carolina by reaching out to women with important health messages before they become pregnant. The Campaign uses a multi-faceted health education campaign to reduce infant mortality, birth defects, premature birth, and chronic health conditions in women, while also aiming to increase the proportion of intended pregnancies in North Carolina. For more information, visit everywomannc.com.

To download a PDF of the news release, click here.

ABOUT MARCH OF DIMES

The March of Dimes is the leading nonprofit organization for pregnancy and baby health. With chapters nationwide and its premier event, March for Babies the March of Dimes works to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality. For the latest resources and information, visit marchofdimes.com or nacersano.org. Find us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter.
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