

52 Weeks to Health: Cleft and Craniofacial Defects



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– As part of the 52 Weeks of Public Health campaign, the Kentucky Department of Public Health (DPH) within the Cabinet of Health and Family Services (CHFS) is promoting awareness of craniofacial birth defects, or defects of the head and face, as part of the National Cleft and Craniofacial Awareness and Prevention Month.

“Craniofacial defects have a significant impact on public health, with nearly 90 babies born a year with cleft lip or cleft palate in Kentucky,” said Dr. Henrietta S. Bada, Director of the Division of Maternal and Child Health for the Kentucky Department for Public Health.

“These defects are common and significantly affect families and the health care system. To improve the chances of having a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby, women should exercise regularly, eat a balanced diet, take a multivitamin daily, refrain from smoking, and talk to their healthcare provider.” said Dr. Bada .

The KDPH encourages the general public, as well as healthcare professionals, educators, and social service professionals to join in raising awareness about craniofacial birth defects by learning about the most common types of craniofacial birth defects, what causes them, how to prevent them, and resources for more information.

Types of Craniofacial Birth Defects

Craniofacial birth defects include cleft lip and cleft palate (orofacial clefts), skull bones joined together too early (craniosynostosis), and small or missing ears (microtia/anotia). Every year in Kentucky, around 90 babies are born with cleft lip or cleft palate, which is

a rate of about 15.6 cases per 10,000 live births. Craniosynostosis and microtia/anotia are rare birth defects, but are still very serious.

Risk Factors

Mothers are at a higher risk of having a baby with a craniofacial birth defect if they have diabetes, have or are treated for maternal thyroid disease, smoke cigarettes, drink alcohol, eat a diet low in carbohydrates or folic acid, take medications such as topiramate or valproic acid for epilepsy, or take clomiphene citrate for fertility.

Additional Information

KDPH maintains the Kentucky Birth Surveillance Registry (KBSR) that tracks information about craniofacial as well as other birth defects. For more information about KBSR please visit the [KBSR website](#) or contact KBSR at 502-564-4830 ext. 4394 or kbsr@ky.gov.

For more general information about craniofacial birth defects and how to prevent them, visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefects/features/craniofacialdefects.html>

<http://www.nccapm.org/>

Throughout the planned 52 Weeks of Public Health promotion, DPH will spotlight a specific public health issue. Additional information about the campaign is available on the DPH website: <http://chfs.ky.gov/dph/default.htm> and will be posted on the CHFS Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/kychfs> where Kentuckians are encouraged to like and share posts among their networks of friends.