

Announcements

Recommendation Regarding Improving Mental Health and Addressing Mental Illness from the Community Preventive Services Task Force

The Community Preventive Services Task Force recently posted new information on its website: “Improving Mental Health and Addressing Mental Illness: Mental Health Benefits Legislation.” The information is available at <http://www.the-communityguide.org/mentalhealth/benefitslegis.html>.

Established in 1996 by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the task force is an independent, nonfederal, uncompensated panel of public health and prevention experts whose members are appointed by the Director of CDC. The task force provides information for a wide range of decision makers on programs, services, and policies aimed at improving population health. Although CDC provides administrative, research, and technical support for the task force, the recommendations developed are those of the task force and do not undergo review or approval by CDC.

National Birth Defects Prevention Month and Folic Acid Awareness Week — January 2014

This year, National Birth Defects Prevention Month focuses on how common, costly, and critical birth defects are in the United States. Birth defects are relatively common, affecting one in every 33 infants born in the United States each year, or approximately 120,000 infants (1). Birth defects also are costly. Each year, total hospital costs for U.S. children and adults with birth defects exceed \$2.6 billion, not including costs for outpatient care or many provider charges (2). As the leading cause of infant mortality, birth defects also are critical, accounting for one in every five infant deaths (3).

January 6–12, 2014, is National Folic Acid Awareness Week. If a woman consumes the recommended amount of folic acid before and during early pregnancy, it can help prevent major birth defects of the brain and spine (neural tube defects) (4). Health-care providers should encourage every woman of childbearing age to consume folic acid from fortified foods or supplements, or a combination of the two, in addition to a varied diet rich in folate. Additional information about folic acid is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/folicacid>.

Health-care professionals can help prevent many other birth defects by encouraging women of childbearing age to manage health conditions and adopt healthy behaviors before becoming pregnant, including not drinking alcohol (5) or using tobacco (6), controlling their blood glucose if they have diabetes (7), maintaining a healthy weight before becoming pregnant (8), and limiting prescription and over-the-counter medications to those that are essential (9). Additional information is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/birthdefects>.

References

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