

## **Common Questions:**

### **What is a birth defect?**

- Birth defects are structural or functional abnormalities that are present at birth

### **What Causes Birth Defects?**

- 70% of birth defects have no known cause
- The remaining birth defects are caused by genetic factors, environmental factors or a combination of the two.

### **Remember:**

- Most babies with birth defects are born to two parents with no known health problems or risk factors.
- Even if you do everything your doctor tells you, you may still deliver a baby with a birth defect.

### **What can be done to decrease the risk of birth defects?**

- Don't drink alcohol, smoke or use illegal drugs
- Get early and regular prenatal care
- Take 400 mcg a day of folic acid recommended by the CDC

### **Remember:**

- Many birth defects occur during the first 3 month of pregnancy, a woman's awareness of her personal health risks and behaviors is important before becoming pregnant

### **How common are birth defects?**

- One of every 33 babies in the United States is born with a birth defect.
- There are several thousand birth defects identified.
- Some of the most common birth defects affect the heart.
- Heart defects make up about one-third to one-fourth of all birth defects.
- In every 1000 births, hearing loss affects 3-4 babies
- Other birth defects include neural tube defects which are defects of the spine and brain, Cleft lip and palate, Hypospadias found in male babies and Down syndrome

Questions developed from information from the National Birth Defects Prevention Network and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention