

Expert Info During Pregnancy and Breastfeeding Now Available Via Text

MotherToBaby Launches Unique ‘Text Counseling’ for Reliable Info About Exposure Risks to Baby

BRENTWOOD, TN - As the world prepares to recognize Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) Awareness Day on September 9th, **MotherToBaby**, a service of the international non-profit Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS), launches a way for expectant moms to have free expert information about the risks of alcohol and other exposures to baby at their fingertips - **via text**.

“The risks to baby of being exposed to things like alcohol, drugs or medications during a woman’s pregnancy or breastfeeding can really vary depending on mom’s metabolism, timing of the exposure, and whole host of other factors,” said Lori Wolfe, MS, a certified genetic counselor and director of MotherToBaby’s North Texas affiliate. “Mom really needs the latest information tailored to her particular circumstance in order to make informed decisions, along with her health care provider, about her and baby’s health. We’re now offering that research-based info in the most convenient way possible,” she added.

Expecting moms will simply need to **text their questions** in English or Spanish to 855-999-3525 to be connected to a bilingual specialist in the field of teratology - the study of exposures that cause birth defects. Standard text messaging rates may apply depending on an individual’s phone plan. Those who do use the new texting service are encouraged to check with their carrier first.

“When someone goes searching the internet, it can be a scary place that often highlights worst-case scenarios only,” explained Al Romeo, RN, PhD and teratogen information specialist at MotherToBaby’s Utah affiliate. “We’re not the internet. We’re registered nurses, genetic counselors and teratogen information specialists on the other end of your cell phone answering texts with the most up-to-date evidence you often can’t find online.”

MotherToBaby, which consists of 14 services housed at universities, hospitals and government institutions across the country, provides free, evidence-based, personalized risk assessments, education and counseling regarding the effects of exposures like prescription and over-the-counter drugs, alcohol, smoking, illicit substances, vaccines, beauty products, herbal supplements, chemicals and more during pregnancy and while breastfeeding. In addition to the new text counseling component, the public can be connected with a bilingual MotherToBaby expert by calling toll-free 1-866-626-6847. The MotherToBaby **website** also houses a library of fact sheets located at www.MotherToBaby.org.

More than 100,000 women and their health care providers seek information about birth defects prevention from MotherToBaby every year. MotherToBaby has been able to launch new outreach efforts to reach underserved populations, including new communication technologies, through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration.

About FASD Awareness Day

FASD Awareness Day has been recognized on the ninth day of the ninth month since 1999 as a reminder for women to abstain from drinking alcohol during the nine months of pregnancy. As many as 1 out of every 100 babies are estimated to be affected by prenatal alcohol exposure, which can result in a range of neurobehavioral disabilities. FASD awareness events also traditionally take place across the nation all month long each September.

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Media Contact: Nicole Chavez, 619-368-3259, nchavez@MotherToBaby.org. Interviews in Spanish can also be arranged.

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On Wednesday, June 17 from 11:00 am - 12:00 pm EDT, a webinar on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome will be presented by Kenneth Lyons Jones, MD, Chief of the Division of Dysmorphology/Teratology at the Department of Pediatrics at the University of California, San Diego.

This webinar will provide a retrospective look at 40 years of the **Fetal Alcohol syndrome**. The presentation will be broken into three parts: recognition of the disorder; reaction to that recognition; and finally, where we are today.

The webinar will be moderated by Christina Chambers, PhD, MPH, Professor, University of California, San Diego.

This webinar, hosted by the **Teratology Society** with the support of **OTIS MotherToBaby**, is FREE and open to the public.

REGISTRATION is required.

Members of the Teratology Society and OTIS MotherToBaby will be able to view the webinar in recorded form if they miss the live presentation.

About the Presenter:

Dr. Kenneth Lyons Jones is the Chief of the Division of Dysmorphology/Teratology at the Department of Pediatrics at the University of California, San Diego and Medical Director of MotherToBaby California. In these activities he has been involved in research, teaching, clinical work and University and public service. His research has focused on the clinical delineation of birth defects, mechanisms of normal and abnormal morphogenesis and the recognition of new human teratogens. Dr. Jones has authored over 400 publications in scientific journals as well as several books, and is the author of Smith's Recognizable Patterns of Human Malformation which is now in its 7th edition. He was one of two doctors at the University of Washington who first identified Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) in the United States in 1973. Over the past 40 years he has continued to make significant contributions to our understanding of the prenatal effects of alcohol, most recently as the head of the Dysmorphology Core of the large NIAAA consortium studying this disorder. Dr. Jones is a Past President of the Teratology Society, Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS), and Western Society for Pediatric Research. He is a member of the Association of American Physicians.

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BRENTWOOD, TN - May 13, 2015 - MotherToBaby Aims To Curb Trend Through New Partnership With 'Healthy Teen Network'

Drug and alcohol abuse during pregnancy that leads to serious birth defects is something health care providers have often warned the general public about, but the message often struggles to reach pregnant teens – until now.

MotherToBaby, a service of the international non-profit Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS), announces a new initiative to reach this especially vulnerable population.

Many studies, including **one recently published** in the Spring 2015 issue of Addictive Behaviors, suggest substance abuse among pregnant teens is a notably disturbing problem, one that often continues even after they find out they're pregnant. "Illicit substances, alcohol, these are all exposures that can do irreversible damage to a developing baby," said Kenneth Lyons Jones, MD, MotherToBaby past president and one of two doctors who first identified Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) in 1973. "Evidently, pregnant teens are particularly vulnerable when it comes to unhealthy behaviors. It's a huge problem that can only be solved by connecting them with the support they need in order to make healthier decisions," he added.

In an effort to reach more pregnant and breastfeeding teens, MotherToBaby has partnered with the **Healthy Teen Network** to provide evidence-based information about exposures, such as drugs and alcohol, during pregnancy through its 866-626-6847 help-line. The Healthy Teen Network is a national non-profit that promotes better outcomes for adolescents and young adults by advancing social change, cultivating innovation, and strengthening youth-supporting professionals and organizations.

"To improve outcomes, including reducing teen pregnancies and births, we need to recognize the complex interrelated factors, or social determinants—such as access to quality education and health services, life goals and aspirations for the future, or healthy relationships—that influence health outcomes," explained Gina Desidario, director of Marketing and Communications for the Healthy Teen Network.

Dr. Jones hopes by encouraging more youth-centered organizations to educate pregnant teens about MotherToBaby's judgment-free, evidence-based counseling service, many birth defects will be prevented. Desidario says it's a service pregnant teens need. "All adolescents and young adults, including teen parents, have a right to comprehensive, developmentally and culturally appropriate, confidential support and services, including contraceptive services, and if pregnant, to full options counseling and services," she said.

This year, as part of May's National Teen Pregnancy Prevention Month, Healthy Teen Network is highlighting a holistic **Youth 360°** frame as a way to positively, inclusively promote adolescent health for all young people. It's launched a series of activities and resources to promote adolescent health and well-being. See the Healthy Teen Network **website** for more information: www.HealthyTeenNetwork.org.

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prescription and over-the-counter drugs, alcohol, smoking, illicit substances, vaccines, beauty products, herbal supplements, chemicals and more during pregnancy and while breastfeeding. The public can be connected with a bilingual (English/Spanish) MotherToBaby expert by calling toll-free 1-866-626-6847. The MotherToBaby website also houses a library of fact sheets located at MotherToBaby.org.

More than 100,000 women and their health care providers seek information about birth defect prevention from MotherToBaby every year. MotherToBaby has been able to launch new outreach efforts to reach vulnerable populations through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Human Resources and Services Administration.

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Brentwood, TN – MotherToBaby and Big Belli LLC, the production company behind the latest pregnancy-focused documentary, “40 Weeks The Movie,” have partnered to provide the women who view the film as well as visit BigBelli.com with expert information regarding exposures during pregnancy and breastfeeding.

The film, created by Christopher Henze’s team of seasoned and award winning talent, including executive producer Kurt Engfehr (“Bowling for Columbine”, “Fahrenheit 9/11”, “Fat, Sick, and Nearly Dead”), casting director Lisa Singer (“The Bachelorette”, “Queer Eye”), and editor April Merl (“2012: A Time for change,” “The Yes Men Fix the World”), follows the week-to-week journeys of parents-to-be.

The film is being shown theatrically throughout the United States. At some screenings, including the April 15th screening in South Hadley, MA, MotherToBaby will be providing audience members with educational materials about medications and more during pregnancy and breastfeeding. In some instances, MotherToBaby experts will also be on hand to answer audience’s questions. To find a screening near you, [click here](#).

The grassroots effort and popularity the film company has generated for the film so far has resulted in creating a web-based extension of filmed information to empower, educate and create a sense of community for expectant moms. Over the next few months, several MotherToBaby experts will be featured in www.Bigbelli.com's informative articles to help provide insight into topics such as **marijuana** during pregnancy, as well as diseases like **Crohn's Disease** and **post-partum depression**.

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BRENTWOOD, TN – “Many potentially devastating birth defects can be prevented,” that’s the message leading researchers in the field want the public to know as the world prepares for the inaugural “World Birth Defects Day,” which will take place on Tuesday, March 3. The commemorative day is being spearheaded by international maternal and infant health advocates.

MotherToBaby, a service of the international non-profit Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS), and the Teratology Society, both professional associations hailed as the premier sources for authoritative information related to birth defects research, reproductive science and toxicology, have partnered to help spread the message about alcohol and folic acid fortification – two major issues currently keeping birth defect rates high world-wide. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 1 in 33 babies are born with a birth defect in the U.S. each year.

Some of the most devastating birth defects are associated with alcohol consumption during pregnancy, according to MotherToBaby experts who provide free, evidence-based information through a toll-free hotline about medications, vaccines, drugs, alcohol and other exposures during pregnancy and breastfeeding. “It’s thought that Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) is the most common recognizable cause of mental retardation,” said Kenneth Lyons Jones, MD, MotherToBaby past-president and one of two doctors who first identified FAS in 1973. Children with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome are born small, have problems with learning and behavior, and may have other birth defects. “It’s totally preventable by avoiding alcohol during pregnancy, yet prenatal alcohol exposure still affects 1 in 100 Americans each

year,” he added.

“Making sure women have access to folic acid regularly is another major issue around the world that could prevent birth defects,” said Mary Alice Smith, PhD, Teratology Society president and professor of developmental and reproductive toxicology at the University of Georgia. At least 400 mcg folic acid daily during pregnancy has been shown to prevent up to 70% of neural tube defects, according to Smith. Neural tube defects are malformations of the spinal cord that are serious and can be life-threatening. Two of the most common neural tube defects are spina bifida and anencephaly, and occur in about 1 in every 1,000 live births.

“Because the neural tube closes in the first month after conception, a time when many women do not yet realize they are pregnant, it is important for women to be taking folic acid supplements before pregnancy, or if they think they might become pregnant,” said Smith. She added that while some grains, like bread and pasta, are required to be fortified with folic acid in the U.S., ensuring more foods are fortified, like corn masa flour, could prevent even more neural tube defects. “The bottom line - we could all do more to raise awareness about this vital issue. The health outcome of babies being born today, tomorrow, and for years to come depend on it.”

MotherToBaby is a suggested resource by many agencies including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) Office of Women’s Health. The public can be connected with bilingual (English/Spanish) teratogen information specialists at MotherToBaby and receive personalized risk assessments, education and counseling by calling toll-free 1-866-626-6847. The MotherToBaby website also houses a library of fact sheets on medications and other exposures during pregnancy and while breastfeeding located at www.MotherToBaby.org.

The Teratology Society consists of 660 members specializing in cell and molecular biology, developmental biology and toxicology, reproduction and endocrinology, nutritional biochemistry, genetics, and epidemiology, as well as the clinical disciplines of prenatal medicine, pediatrics, obstetrics, neonatology, medical genetics, and teratogen risk counseling. In addition, it publishes the scientific journal, Birth Defects Research, Parts A, B, and C. Scientists interested in becoming a Teratology Society member are encouraged to visit www.Teratology.org.

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