

Birth Defects Experts to Present Free Webinar May 2 on Marijuana Research in Pregnancy and Breastfeeding

PLEASE NOTE: This webinar has already passed, but the recorded version can be seen at the following link: <http://bit.ly/2Hfcr6z>

OTIS, Teratology Society, SMFM, NSGC Team Up to Shed Light on Prenatal and Postnatal Marijuana Exposure Effects

BRENTWOOD, TN - From plant form to CBD oil, with increasing legalization of marijuana across U.S. states, there comes the need for more information on its impact should a consumer become pregnant. Birth defects experts from the Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS), the scientific non-profit society that provides the MotherToBaby no-cost service, are offering the latest data surrounding marijuana exposure in pregnancy and lactation during a **free webinar** for healthcare providers on May 2, 2019 at 12p Pacific/3p Eastern.

"If I use edibles instead of smoke marijuana, that should be safer during pregnancy and breastfeeding, right?" - It's just one of the many questions the MotherToBaby service, which answers questions about exposures during pregnancy and breastfeeding via phone, text, live chat and its MotherToBaby.org website, is now receiving on a regular basis according to Christina Chambers, PhD, MPH, MotherToBaby president and professor of pediatrics at the University of California, San Diego. Dr. Chambers also heads up Mommy's Milk Human Milk Research Biorepository, the first-ever research database of human breast milk which produced a ground-breaking study last year suggesting that marijuana can linger in breast milk for far longer (up to six days) than previously thought. "As more states legalize marijuana for medicinal and recreational use, it's critical we look at how it's impacting the next generation," she said.

The webinar, "Sifting through the Smoke: The Latest Research Surrounding Marijuana Exposure in Pregnancy and Breastfeeding," is a collaboration with the National Society of Genetic Counselors (NSGC) and, in addition to OTIS/MotherToBaby, will include presenters representing the Teratology Society and the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine (SMFM). The webinar is free and aimed at healthcare providers and researchers; registration is required at the following link: <http://bit.ly/MarijuanaWebinar2019>.

"Older studies have suggested that if a mother uses marijuana during pregnancy, she might be at risk for having a smaller baby born early and/or having it experience developmental delays," said Sarah Obican, MD, a Maternal-Fetal Medicine subspecialist at the University of South Florida, director of MotherToBaby's Florida affiliate, and Dr. Chambers' co-presenter for the webinar. "However, marijuana is produced today at a higher potency level, so it's critical we stay vigilant in our research to better understand its impact," she added.

The webinar is expected to run approximately one hour and presenters will be available to answer questions from attendees.

More about OTIS and MotherToBaby

The Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS) is a professional scientific society made up of individuals engaged in assessing and evaluating risks to pregnancy and breastfeeding from environmental exposures. Members include, but are not limited to, specialists in the fields of: obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics, genetics, dysmorphology, perinatal epidemiology, teratology, behavioral teratology, pharmacy, genetic counseling, nursing, midwifery, maternal and child health, public health, and includes experts that provide MotherToBaby services and researchers that conduct MotherToBaby Pregnancy Studies. MotherToBaby is a suggested resource by many federal agencies including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). To be connected with a MotherToBaby expert, please call (866) 626-6847, text questions to (855) 999-3525 (standard messaging rates might apply, check with your carrier) or visit www.MotherToBaby.org.

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Media Contact: Nicole Chavez, 619-368-3259, nchavez@MotherToBaby.org.

Questions? Call 866.626.6847 | Text 855.999.3525 | Email or Chat at MotherToBaby.org.

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Birth Defects Experts to Present Free Webinar May 2 on Marijuana Research in Pregnancy and Breastfeeding

In case you missed it during January's Birth Defects Prevention Month, MotherToBaby, in coordination with the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine (SMFM) and the Teratology Society, offered a free two-part webinar series for healthcare providers on the importance of pregnancy exposure research, its challenges and the new Task Force on Research Specific to Pregnant and Lactating Women (PRGLAC) report. The recorded webinar series can be viewed at the following links:

- Current and Future Trends in Research with Pregnant and Lactating Women (Part 1): <http://bit.ly/PregResearch1>
- Using Registries and Crowdsourcing to Conduct Research with Pregnant and Lactating Women (Part 2): <http://bit.ly/PregResearch2>

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'Best for You. Best for Baby.' Focus of National Birth Defects Prevention Month 2019

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 8, 2019

BRENTWOOD, TN - "A baby is born with a birth defect in the United States every 4 ½ minutes. We can change that alarming statistic," said Christina Chambers, PhD, MPH, President of MotherToBaby, a free service of the non-profit Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS). MotherToBaby is joining with leading prenatal health experts from the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), American Academy of Pediatrics, the March of Dimes, and the Teratology Society this month to increase awareness of 5 critical tips to reduce the chances of having a baby with a birth defect.

The National Birth Defects Prevention Month campaign theme, "**Best for You. Best for Baby.**" aims to raise

awareness of preventable birth defects. “Furthermore, we want to emphasize the importance of pregnancy registries, which often lead to the discovery of even more ways to prevent birth defects,” explained Dr. Chambers, who also serves as professor of pediatrics at UC San Diego. MotherToBaby will join the Teratology Society and the Society for Maternal-Fetal Medicine in co-hosting a free two-part webinar series for healthcare providers on the importance of pregnancy exposure research, its challenges and the new Task Force on Research Specific to Pregnant and Lactating Women (PRGLAC) report. The webinar series will take place **Thursday January 17th at 1pm-1:30 ET** and **Tuesday January 29th at 12pm-12:30p ET** and will be free to join, but advanced registration is required at the following links:



- ***Current and Future Trends in Research with Pregnant and Lactating Women (Part 1):***
<http://bit.ly/PregResearch1>
- ***Using Registries and Crowdsourcing to Conduct Research with Pregnant and Lactating Women (Part 2):***
<http://bit.ly/PregResearch2>

MotherToBaby provides free evidence-based information to mothers, health care professionals, and the general public about medications and other exposures during pregnancy and while breastfeeding through its helpline (866) 626-6847, texting service (855) 999-3525, or via live chat and email on www.MotherToBaby.org. MotherToBaby also has a free app available for iOS and Android devices. MotherToBaby is recommended by many agencies, including the CDC.

MotherToBaby encourages the public to follow these steps to increase chances of a having a healthy baby:

- Be sure to take 400 micrograms (mcg) of folic acid every day.
 - Folic acid is very important because it can help prevent some major birth defects of the baby’s brain and spine.
- Book a visit with your healthcare provider before stopping or starting any medicine.
 - There are often benefits to continuing treatment throughout pregnancy. Discussing a treatment plan before a pregnancy allows a woman and her health care provider to weigh the pros and cons of all options to keep mom and baby as healthy as possible.
- Become up-to-date with all vaccines, including the flu shot.
 - Having the right vaccinations, like the flu and Tdap vaccines, at the right time during pregnancy can help keep a woman and her baby healthy.
- Before you get pregnant, try to reach a healthy weight.
 - Obesity increases the risk for several serious birth defects and other pregnancy complications.
- Boost your health by avoiding harmful substances during pregnancy, such as alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.
 - There is no known safe amount of alcohol during pregnancy and its exposure can cause major birth defects.
 - Smoking during pregnancy can cause dangerous chemicals to damage the placenta and/or reach baby’s bloodstream.
 - The opioid addiction epidemic has led to a sharp increase in Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS), premature birth and drug withdrawal in developing babies.

“Birth defects are a common cause of death in the first year of a baby’s life, but change happens through awareness,” added Jason L. Salemi, PhD, MPH, NBDPN President. “We’re thrilled MotherToBaby is doing its part to positively change the outcome for babies across North America.”

How You Can Help

MotherToBaby encourages health advocates as well as the general public to be active participants in National Birth Defects Prevention Month. Follow and share **#Best4YouBest4Baby** messages on social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. In addition, the complete 2019 NBDPN Birth Defects Prevention Month information packet, including this year’s primary tips for birth defects prevention, **“Best for You. Best for Baby. 5 Tips for Preventing Birth Defects,”** is available online at: <https://www.nbdpn.org/bdpm.php>. All materials can be printed, electronically conveyed, or added to websites for distribution as needed.

Additional Resources to Support Healthy Pregnancies

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The CDC’s National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities (NCBDDD) strives to advance the health and well-being of our nation’s most vulnerable populations.
www.CDC.gov/ncbddd

American Academy of Pediatrics

Dedicated to the health of all children, providing age-specific health information.
www.healthychildren.org

The Teratology Society

An international and multidisciplinary group of scientists including researchers, clinicians, epidemiologists, and public health professionals from academia, government and industry who study birth defects, reproduction, and disorders of developmental origin.
www.Teratology.org

March of Dimes

An organization aiming to make sure babies get the strongest start possible as well as reducing the rate of prematurity.
www.marchofdimes.org

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On the heels of National Eczema Awareness Month, MotherToBaby Pregnancy Studies has launched their newest study on Dupixent® (dupilumab), an injectable medication used to treat patients with moderate to severe atopic dermatitis, the most common form of eczema. The study will provide information on the safety of Dupixent® when used during pregnancy, and will help women and their healthcare providers get the information they need to make more informed treatment decisions.

The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) estimates that eczema affects 30 percent of the U.S. population. The condition is typically characterized by dry, irritated and inflamed skin, which tends to crack or bleed when scratched. Most people who suffer from eczema are more susceptible to skin infections caused by bacteria and viruses. With eczema being more common in women than men, there is an urgent need for more information on treatment safety during pregnancy.

Dr. Christina Chambers, an epidemiologist at the University of California San Diego who specializes in the area of medication exposures and their effects on pregnancy, is leading the study. “Eczema is such a common condition in women, and women who have more severe forms of it may benefit from this new line of treatment. But for pregnant women, a big question remains about whether these medications have any impact on a developing baby. Our study aims to provide this much-needed information,” said Chambers.

Dupixent® was launched in the United States in April 2017 as the first biologic medication approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to treat adults with moderate to severe atopic dermatitis. Biologic therapies are unique in that they work by selectively targeting specific immune responses, rather than suppressing the entire immune system.

MotherToBaby aims to recruit 300 pregnant women throughout the U.S. and Canada to participate in the study over the next 5½ years. Pregnant women who are diagnosed with moderate to severe atopic dermatitis may qualify whether they have or have not been exposed to Dupixent®. To learn more about the study, call 877.311.8972 or visit: [Eczema/Atopic Dermatitis and Pregnancy Study](#).

To learn more about MotherToBaby Pregnancy Studies, view our [Pregnancy Studies 101](#) flyer.

More About MotherToBaby

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. More than 100,000 women and their health care providers seek information about birth defects prevention from MotherToBaby every year. MotherToBaby Pregnancy Studies are conducted by the Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS) and coordinated at the University of California, San Diego.

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Following White House Proclamation, MotherToBaby Offers One-Stop for Latest Information about Opioid Effects on Developing Babies

BRENTWOOD, TN –A series of new opioid-specific fact sheets, blogs and a recent webinar are just some of the pregnancy and breastfeeding-related resources unveiled by MotherToBaby, a service of the non-profit Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS), in response to the alarming toll opioid addiction is taking on communities from coast to coast. The new resources come as the U.S. recognizes National Recovery Month and the **White House proclaims** September 16 - 22, 2018 Prescription Opioid and Heroin Epidemic Awareness Week.

MotherToBaby is recommended by many agencies, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), for evidence-based information about exposures, like opioids, during pregnancy and breastfeeding. It has 15 affiliates across the country that provide this service to all 50 states as well as the US territories.

The new MotherToBaby resources surrounding opioids can be found at www.MotherToBaby.org/opioids and include resources to help healthcare providers, addiction specialists, and women struggling with addiction to prescription and illicit drugs:

- Evidence-based fact sheets on a variety of opioids such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, fentanyl, morphine, buprenorphine, heroin, hydromorphone, methadone, codeine and tramadol.
- A webinar for health care providers on Opioid Abuse in Pregnancy and Breastfeeding, conducted by OTIS, the National Society of Genetic Counselors, the Society of Maternal-Fetal Medicine and the Teratology Society.
- Opioid-specific blogs authored by teratogen information specialists, experts in assessing birth defects risks from exposures during pregnancy and breastfeeding.
- Ways for women and health care providers to receive free and confidential personalized risk assessments through MotherToBaby's toll-free helpline (866) 626-6847, text line (855) 999-3525 (standard messaging rates may apply), live chat and email-an-expert services.
- Additional resources for addiction support.

"It's reached the level where it's almost on a daily basis that I take care of pregnant and breastfeeding women

struggling with opioid dependency,” said Sarah Obican, MD, Maternal-Fetal Medicine Subspecialist at the University of South Florida and director of the new MotherToBaby Florida affiliate set to open in November. Florida is just one of the states where health officials and providers are seeing the opioid epidemic unfold first-hand. Rates of Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (NAS) among Florida’s infants have increased over the past four years, according to the **Florida Birth Defects Registry** which tracks the number of infants diagnosed with NAS.

“While there’s no evidence at this time of an increased risk for birth defects, babies with NAS born to opioid-addicted mothers may be at an increased risk for adverse neurobehavioral effects,” explained Dr. Obican. “They are simply not getting the best possible start to life that they deserve, but we can change that by supporting mom and getting her the resources she needs.”

More about MotherToBaby, a service of OTIS.

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