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Free Expert Counseling about Medication Use during Pregnancy Now Just a Click Away

MotherToBaby Connects Public with Health Experts through Unique New Website, Live Chat

BRENTWOOD, TN – As January’s National Birth Defects Prevention Month continues to be recognized around the country, [MotherToBaby](http://www.MotherToBaby.org), a service of the international non-profit Organization of Teratology Information Specialists (OTIS), launches new digital ways for expectant moms and health care providers to get free expert information about the risks of medications and other exposures during pregnancy and breastfeeding – through instantaneous, private live chat on www.MotherToBaby.org.

The digital initiative comes just a few short months after the service launched a first-of-its-kind [texting](#) component where the public can receive free expert answers by texting questions to 855-999-3525. “It’s our experience that all moms-to-be want the best information possible in order to have a healthy baby,” said Kenneth Lyons Jones, MD, MotherToBaby Past-President and world-renowned pediatrician at UC San Diego. “No matter what their income level or socio-economic situation, we feel every woman should have access to the best, expert health information possible. We’re making it easy for them to accomplish this through our new digital services.”

Expectant moms, as well as those who are breastfeeding, will simply need to visit www.MotherToBaby.org on their computer or phone to be connected to a bilingual (English/Spanish) specialist in the field of teratology – the study of exposures that cause birth defects. The newly-revamped website includes options to chat live through private, instant messaging or to email-an-expert. The MotherToBaby website also houses a library of free downloadable fact sheets in both English and Spanish on a variety of exposures. The digital counseling components complement the services’ traditional, phone counseling service (available toll-free at 866-626-6847) which has been available for more than 30 years.

Dr. Jones, a health care provider himself, expects this new way of delivering evidence-based information about the risks of exposures like medications, vaccines, chemicals, environmental agents and diseases, will also be convenient for his busy colleagues who see patients. “Oftentimes, a health care provider may only have a few minutes in-between patient appointments to get the latest teratogen information they need quickly. This will be a great option for them as well,” he said.

Sonia Alvarado, a bilingual teratogen information specialist who's been based at MotherToBaby's California affiliate for more than a decade, is leading the online live chat initiative. "The risk to the developing baby from exposures like medications during a mom's pregnancy can vary greatly depending on timing of the exposure, mom's metabolism and much more," she said. "To be able to provide her with information tailored to her personal circumstance allows her to make informed decisions along with the guidance of her doctor. To be able to empower her with that kind of knowledge is extremely rewarding."

About MotherToBaby

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.

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 National Birth Defects Prevention Month

Roughly 120,000 babies are affected by birth defects each year in the United States, according to the National Birth Defects Prevention Network (NBDPN). The NBDPN established the nationally-recognized Birth Defects Prevention Month in order to raise public awareness of the problem that can sometimes lead to lifelong challenges and disability. To learn more about the NBDPN, visit www.nbdpn.org.

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