

For Immediate Release

Provincial research shows that men and women have more to learn when it comes to planning for babies

Toronto, Ontario – March X, 2005 – Recent provincial research¹ found that more than a third of Ontarians feel that when planning a pregnancy, the priority for men should be financial while 32 per cent of those polled feel the priority for women should be eating well and taking care of themselves.

However, studies show that a healthy baby is largely dependent on the health of *both* the mother and the father. Issues including family health history, environmental hazards, stress, nutrition, physical activity, smoking, alcohol, drugs, caffeine, and sexually transmitted infections – in both men and women – can affect the chances of getting pregnant and of having a healthy baby.

“Most people know that prenatal care is important in improving healthy pregnancy outcomes,” says Barb Willet, Manager, Best Start Resource Centre. “But prenatal care often begins too late in pregnancy to prevent adverse results. Many people wait for a positive pregnancy test before making changes to their overall health and lifestyle. This is when they quit smoking and stop drinking. However, these efforts are often too late and could put the fetus at risk during the early stages of critical development.”

¹ Leger Marketing omnibus survey conducted November 2 to 7, 2004 on behalf of Best Start Resource Centre. A total of 395 interviews were completed. The margin of error for a sample of this size is +/- 4.9%, 19 times out of 20.

Best Start, Ontario's maternal, newborn and early child development resource centre, is committed to promoting health in men and women prior to pregnancy and is launching a provincial awareness campaign to help all men and women who are planning a pregnancy.

"It's important to talk to your health care provider about planning a pregnancy," says Dr. Paula Stewart, Perinatal Partnership Program of Eastern and Southeastern Ontario.

"Most people know that it is important for women to take folic acid and stop drinking alcohol when planning a pregnancy. But it is equally as important for men to learn how environmental toxins, stress and genetics may affect their plans for conceiving a healthy baby."

Best Start will be working with public health units and community health agencies across the province to provide resources to help inform people about the important issues they need to consider when planning a pregnancy. The awareness campaign will also include ads in and on buses, subways and GO trains, and in movie theatres across Ontario.

For more information about health before pregnancy, visit www.healthbeforepregnancy.ca or talk to your health care provider.

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*For more information about the Health Before Pregnancy Awareness Campaign or about the provincial survey, please contact:
Danielle D'Agostino
danielle.dagostino@rogers.com
phone/fax: 905-274-7337*