

Is there a  
baby in  
your future?  
Plan for it.



**best start  
meilleur départ**

Ontario's maternal, newborn and early  
child development resource centre  
Centre de ressources sur la maternité,  
les nouveau-nés et le développement  
des jeunes enfants de l'Ontario



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## Printing this resource:

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**The Best Start Resource Centre is a key program of the Ontario Prevention Clearinghouse ([www.opc.on.ca](http://www.opc.on.ca))**

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# IS THERE A BABY IN YOUR FUTURE?



You plan for school, work, holidays and even your retirement. What about your baby? Parenting begins long before your baby is conceived.

Babies begin to develop even before women know they are pregnant. This means that the time to prepare for your baby's health is before you even get pregnant. There are things that both **men and women** can do to improve the health of their future children.

A baby can change your life. But are you ready? Making decisions about pregnancy can be challenging. Whether you are alone or with a partner, this workbook will serve as a guide to one of the biggest decisions you will ever make.

We used to think that saving some money, exercise and healthy eating were all we needed to do to get ready to start a family. These choices do make a big difference but there is more. This workbook will discuss some of the other things that can affect men and women and the health of their future children.

You'll find answers to commonly asked questions, checklists, activities to do, and lists of places to go and people to talk to for more information. Some pages will have information you already know – and what a great reminder! Other pages might encourage you to think differently or about new things. Parenting is an important decision that will change your life. Planning ahead and thinking about your health *before* pregnancy can make a big difference to the health of your future children

## *Planning on having a baby someday?*

So you are thinking about an addition to your home - a new baby. Congratulations on planning ahead! By thinking ahead you and your partner can make plans and healthy choices, even before you get pregnant. By planning ahead, you will have time to:

- ❖ Think things over
- ❖ Talk with your partner
- ❖ Ask questions about your health
- ❖ Find out about “health before pregnancy”
- ❖ Book a health before pregnancy check up with your health care provider
- ❖ Make healthy choices
- ❖ Start with the healthiest possible sperm and egg before pregnancy
- ❖ Be as healthy as possible during the critical early weeks of pregnancy, before you even know you are pregnant

## *Thinking about parenthood*

Giving life is powerful. You may be thinking about what a new baby might mean to you. You may be wondering whether the journey to parenthood is one you want to take. It is time to think about what is important to you, and how you will help your baby make sense of the world.



# IS THERE A BABY IN YOUR FUTURE?

## *Fitting babies into your circle of life*

We are all born into a community that shapes how we think talk and act. This often affects what we believe about families, health and pregnancy. Even within a community, there are different ways of doing things. You might feel the same as your partner about who should care for children, yet your neighbours seem to have another plan that works well for them. This is the time to discuss your thoughts and feelings with your partner.

## *What does family have to do with it?*

Ask yourself how you feel about....

- ❖ Being a parent
- ❖ Health checkups before getting pregnant
- ❖ Who should do what within the expanded family
- ❖ Time with family
- ❖ The decision to have children or not
- ❖ Staying home with children or working outside the home
- ❖ Your body
- ❖ Yourself as a person

## *What about relatives?*

Your baby will inherit characteristics from your family and the family of your partner. Whose nose will the baby have? What colour will his or her eyes be? Your relatives can help you celebrate your growing family, and can provide important support and information once the baby arrives.

*Before* pregnancy, think about your family and the family of your partner. Could there be any genetic concerns? In your family and your partner's family history are there any birth defects, disabilities, or illnesses that could be passed on to a future baby? If you have concerns, talk to a genetic counsellor.

### FOR HELP CLOSE TO HOME CONTACT:

Health care provider: \_\_\_\_\_

Local public health unit: Call INFOLine at 1-800-268-1154 / 416-341-5518  
\_\_\_\_\_

Genetic counsellor: Canadian Association of Genetic Counsellors or [www.cagc-accg.ca](http://www.cagc-accg.ca)  
\_\_\_\_\_





# ALCOHOL



## Putting baby before booze

Beer and hockey. Wine and food. Friends and liquor. For years, these pair-ups have been part of Canadian culture. Many people have found the key to drinking a safe amount of alcohol. But when people start thinking about having a baby, different ideas may surface.

Alcohol can affect a man's sperm. Men who drink alcohol have a greater chance of having low sperm counts – making it harder for a couple to get pregnant. And no one knows for sure how much alcohol it takes to harm a baby as it forms inside a mom-to-be. But we do know that each time a woman drinks, the alcohol will reach the growing baby. The baby's body and brain can struggle to develop normally. The child could face future problems in their intellectual and physical capabilities and behaviour. These are challenges no parent would want to risk if they had a choice. If you are planning a pregnancy, you need to avoid all alcohol all of the time once you stop using birth control and know there is a chance of pregnancy.

### *What is your drinking personality?*

The facts about alcohol become more sobering when you start talking about pregnancy. For you and your partner, this could be a time to take a close look at old habits. As much as you want a baby, can you really pour your last drink? Ask yourself these questions:

- ❖ What are the reasons I choose to drink?
- ❖ How often is alcohol a part of my life? (daily, monthly or at social events)
- ❖ How would I feel about not drinking at all at the next party I am invited to?
- ❖ Do I associate drinking with smoking, eating, watching TV or other activities?
- ❖ How long would it take me to become alcohol-free?

### *Am I hooked?*

*"I like to have a few drinks now and I don't really need it. I can give it up when the time."* Or can you? If you have a drinking problem, often you are the last person to recognize it. Even if you know you have a drinking problem you probably don't talk about it. What is a drinking problem?

Answer yes or no to the following questions:

- ❖ I feel I should cut down on my drinking.
- ❖ People annoy me when they bug me about my drinking.
- ❖ I sometimes feel guilty about my drinking and the behaviour it causes.
- ❖ At times I drink first thing in the morning to steady my nerves or treat a hangover.
- ❖ On days when I have alcohol, I drink more than 2 drinks\*.
- ❖ I drink more than 11 drinks\* in an average week (women).
- ❖ I drink more than 14 drinks\* in an average week (men).

\* One standard drink is:

- one bottle of beer (341ml, 12oz, 5% alcohol)
- one bottle cooler (341ml, 12oz, 5% alcohol)
- one glass of wine (142ml, 5oz, 12% alcohol)
- one small glass sherry or port (85ml, 3oz, 18% alcohol)
- one shot of spirits (43ml, 1.5oz, 40% alcohol)

*All of these contain the same amount of alcohol and will have the same effect on the fetus. Check the container. Some beverages contain higher amounts of alcohol.*

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you could have a drinking problem that needs attention *before* you enter into pregnancy.



# ALCOHOL

### *Glass action – what you can do*

People drink alcohol at different times for different reasons. You have your own. Think about when you drink. What other activities can you do instead, even before pregnancy?

I can....

1. Use alcohol-free mixers at parties such as equal parts juice and ginger ale.
2. Get physical, become active before pregnancy.
3. Read a book on baby names, parenting or other interests.
4. Talk with a friend.

My ideas of other activities I can do instead of drinking alcohol:

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So much has been written about alcohol and health. On one hand, studies tell us that small amounts of alcohol may protect our hearts. On the other hand, studies also tell us that more than 2 drinks a day may lead to possible health problems. **What we do know is that pregnancy is not a time for drinking – it is a time for new beginnings. In fact, it is best to stop drinking *before* pregnancy.**

### FOR HELP CLOSE TO HOME CONTACT:

Health care provider: \_\_\_\_\_

Local community mental health services: \_\_\_\_\_

Alcoholics Anonymous and/or Al-Anon: \_\_\_\_\_

Local public health unit: Call INFOLine at 1-800-268-1154 / 416-341-5518

Motherisk, Alcohol and Substance Use Helpline: 1-877-327-4636 or [www.motherisk.org](http://www.motherisk.org)

Drug and Alcohol Facts Information Line (Centre for Addiction and Mental Health): 1-800-463-6273



# SMOKING



## Taking baby steps for a healthy baby

You have talked about quitting before. It's hard. Smoking is an addiction. It is something you turn to when you are stressed or when you are out socially with your friends. It's a habit. But now it has taken on a new meaning. A baby may be in your future. You can't imagine bringing a young life into a smoky world, but where do you start? Just by thinking about stopping smoking, you have already made a start.

You took the time to worry about the fact that your smoking or your partner's smoking could make a difference in the health of your baby, even before birth. In fact, smoking can make it more difficult for you to get pregnant. Smoking reduces fertility for both men and women. Being in a smoke filled room can have the same effect.

You may have heard that smoking can cause a baby to be born too soon or too small. A smaller baby does not mean an easier delivery. And after birth, a baby born to smoking parents can be harder to take care of. That could mean more crying, colds, ear infections and lung problems. Quitting smoking does not cause stress for your baby, as some may have lead you to believe. It is not easy, but deciding how to quit today is an important beginning to a healthier future. You've just taken your first baby step to quitting by reading this! If you have made a promise to yourself to quit smoking, you will want to know the facts about smoking and the health of your baby and partner.

We can wait until we're pregnant and then quit smoking.

Stopping your habit might be stressful. It could take many tries. You need to do it now – *before* you get pregnant.

My friend smoked when she was pregnant and her baby is fine.

Tobacco takes its toll in ways you can't always see. Some effects may not show at the time of birth and emerge later on in life.

Smoking will keep me from gaining too much weight when I am pregnant.

Pregnancy calls for eating well. Weight gain is a natural and important part of growing a healthy baby. You will lose weight naturally after the birth by healthy eating, being active and breastfeeding.

If I smoke "light" cigarettes, they are less harmful.

People take in as much tar and nicotine from "light" cigarettes as from regular ones.



# SMOKING

## *The burning risks...*

### **Your health, puff by puff!**

Smoking or exposure to second hand smoke during pregnancy is likely to mean:

- ❖ A higher chance of miscarriage
- ❖ A baby born too early or under weight
- ❖ Labour and delivery complications
- ❖ Loss of the baby during birth

## *When you smoke, your baby smokes!*

- ❖ The chemicals in tobacco smoke get into a baby's blood stream cutting oxygen by 25 %, affecting growth and overall health.
- ❖ A small child held by a smoking parent takes in more cancer-causing chemicals per kilogram of body weight than the parent.
- ❖ A baby exposed to second hand smoke is more likely to develop colds, coughs, ear infections, and breathing problems including asthma and illnesses such as pneumonia.
- ❖ A smoker's baby is more likely to need hospital treatment due to illness in their first year of life.
- ❖ A baby exposed to second hand smoke is twice as likely to die of sudden infant death syndrome (crib or cot death).

## *Clear the air — you're almost there!*

The chemicals in tobacco smoke will harm smokers and those exposed to second hand smoke. Smoking is a leading cause of impotence and lowers sperm count in men. Smoking also makes it harder for some women to get pregnant. That's why a decision to clear the air of smoke needs to be a family affair, not just the promise of one parent or another. Knowing the harm that smoking brings to you and your family brings you halfway to kicking the habit. You may have tried to quit before. You may think that you can't. But studies show that the more often you try, the more likely you will finally do it – for good.

## *No more “ifs” “ands” or “butts”*

- ❖ Make your home smoke-free; restrict smoking to outside.
- ❖ Decide to quit and set a quit date. You will be joining millions of people who have succeeded some even after decades of smoking.
- ❖ Quitting has several steps. You have started by just thinking about it. Now keep going.
- ❖ Know your best supports. Keep those people close and ask them for help to stay on track.
- ❖ Don't lose faith if you slip back into smoking. Never give up on yourself or your partner who might be trying to quit.

### **FOR HELP CLOSE TO HOME CONTACT:**

Health care provider: \_\_\_\_\_

Local public health unit: Call INFOline at 1-800-268-1154 / 416-341-5518

Stop smoking program or group: \_\_\_\_\_

The Lung Association Information Line: 1-800-972-2636

Smokers Help Line: 1-877-513-5333





# MEDICATIONS: OVER-THE-COUNTER-DRUGS AND PRESCRIBED



## Relief for adults – risk for the unborn

Over the next 2 days, 30% of the population will use some kind of over-the-counter drugs (OTC). These are medications bought without a doctor's prescription.

We are used to treating headaches, coughs and other illnesses with medications by pulling a remedy out of the medicine cabinet. But when a couple is planning a pregnancy, the door of the medicine cabinet should not be opening as often! A drug that is safe for an adult may not be safe for a developing baby.

### Drugs come in many disguises...

OTC drugs are designed as painkillers, sleep-aids, laxatives and others. Don't be fooled – vitamins and herbal treatments are drugs too. OTC drugs are misleading because they don't need a prescription. And the directions on the label may not apply to pregnant women. They are still serious drugs and a growing fetus can absorb all drugs. Also some OTC drugs can be addictive—painkillers, nasal sprays or laxatives. Even dads need to be concerned. Large amounts of

acetaminophen, for example, Tylenol, can affect a man's fertility. Before you get pregnant, talk to your health care provider about all the drugs, vitamins and herbal treatments that you use.

### Drug-test your know-how

Before taking OTC drugs, ask yourself...

- ❖ Why am I taking it?
- ❖ What type of drug is it?
- ❖ Are there limits to who should use it or with what?
- ❖ Am I taking more than the recommended dose?
- ❖ Can it harm my baby if my partner or I get pregnant?
- ❖ Is there something safer that I can do or use?

### Drug-free answers for common health problems

Many people face the health challenges below, but the first treatment does not have to be drugs. Here are some alternative suggestions.

### Your first steps!

When planning a pregnancy I will...

- ❖ Assume that all OTC drugs could affect the safety of my developing baby.
- ❖ Talk to my health care provider or pharmacist before taking any OTC drug.
- ❖ Read instructions on the OTC drug labels.
- ❖ Keep track of what I am taking and how much.

SLEEPLESSNESS	PAIN	COLDS OR FLU	CONSTIPATION
Exercise regularly	Take a bath or a shower	Reduce activity	Don't put off the "urge" to go to the bathroom
Relax – breathe deeply	Relax	Get some rest	Eat a high fibre diet
Keep a regular sleep routine	Do simple exercises	Eat a balanced diet	Drink 8-10 glasses of water every day
Avoid caffeine, especially after 3pm	Massage	Drink plenty of fluids	Be active every day
Avoid nicotine and alcohol	Talk with friends and relatives	Use a cool air vaporizer	Aim for 5-10 servings of fruit or vegetables daily
Drink warm milk before bed	Think of something else — book, movie	Gargle with water or suck on hard candy	Choose whole grain cereals and bread

*If you have been taking OTC drugs for an ongoing or worsening problem, you may need medical help.*





# HEALTHY EATING



## Your recipe for a healthier baby!

Babies often get a good head start on growing, well before most women learn that they are pregnant. If you are already eating a healthy diet at the time pregnancy happens, you'll have helped your baby get the best start possible.

**Healthy eating** can even help you to better the odds of getting pregnant in the first place. Research suggests that the roles both men's and women's bodies play in pregnancy can be affected by too much or too little of some important nutrients.

**Healthy food** choices, before and during pregnancy, tie into how well a baby forms and grows. Those choices also help a woman be the weight that is healthy for her at each stage of pregnancy.

**Eating habits** are formed early in life so it is important that both want-to-be parents set good examples. Start now.

### *Your choices*

For each statement, check a 'Yes' or 'No' box that applies to you.

Do you eat regular meals and snacks?

Regular meals and snacks will give your body the energy and nutrients it needs everyday. Be sure to eat breakfast, don't skip meals or go longer than 3 to 4 hours without eating. Some people make the mistake of eating too little throughout the day, which can lead to increased hunger later in the day and result in over eating. Include foods from each of the 4 food groups at every meal and foods from at least 2 food groups for snacks.

■ YES ■ NO

Do you eat 5-12 servings of grain products each day?

These foods are your main source of energy. They are a good source of iron and fibre. Choose whole grain breads and cereals, rice and pasta.

■ YES ■ NO

Do you eat 5-10 servings of vegetables and fruit each day?

These foods will give you important vitamins and fibre. Choose dark green and orange vegetables and fruit more often.

■ YES ■ NO

Do you eat 3-4 servings of milk products each day?

These foods will give you a source of calcium and protein. Milk, cheese and yogurt are some of the foods in this food group. Choose lower fat milk products more often. (If you are allergic or have intolerance to milk, consult a dietician for alternative sources of calcium.)

■ YES ■ NO

Do you eat 2-3 servings of meat and alternatives each day?

These foods provide you with iron and protein. Choose leaner meats, poultry and fish, as well as beans, lentils and tofu more often. (Vegetarians who do not eat eggs or milk products may need to consult a dietician to ensure that they are getting enough iron, vitamin B-12 and protein.)

■ YES ■ NO

Do you eat small amounts of "other" foods?

Other foods are not part of the 4 food groups but they add taste and enjoyment to eating. Sweets, snack foods and added fats such as margarine and olive oil can be enjoyed in small amounts.

■ YES ■ NO

### *Bag of balance*

All "checks" mean you are making a difference to your own health and to the future health of your baby.



# HEALTHY EATING

## *Coffee, tea and other beverages*

It is important to drink enough fluid every day to prevent dehydration. The recommendation is 8-10 glasses of fluid each day. Make water one of your choices.

Other beverage choices may contain caffeine. Coffee, tea and chocolate are some sources of caffeine. Too much caffeine may result in a baby being born underweight. While planning a pregnancy and during pregnancy limit your caffeine intake to 300 milligrams (1½ cups of coffee) per day.

## *Your meal ticket to change*

No one food or food group will meet all of your needs. You should have a mix of foods to get the vitamins and nutrients you and your baby need. Use this space to write down changes that you would like to make.

Example:

**GOAL:** I'd like to learn more about healthy eating.

**PLAN:** I'll get a copy of *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating*.

**GOAL:**

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**PLAN:**

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**GOAL:**

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**PLAN:**

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### FOR HELP CLOSE TO HOME CONTACT:

Registered Dietician at the local public health unit, hospital or community health centre:

Health care provider:

Library:

Bookstores:

*Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating:*

[http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hpfb-dgpsa/onpp-bppn/food\\_guide\\_rainbow\\_e.html](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hpfb-dgpsa/onpp-bppn/food_guide_rainbow_e.html)





# FOLIC ACID

## Your “before pregnancy” vitamin!

Vitamins are the building blocks for all bodies. Who knows better than the tiniest bodies as they grow inside their mothers? They count on their mothers for nutrients for healthy tissues and bones. You can reduce the risk of defects of the brain or spinal cord (e.g. neural tube defects such as spina bifida) by getting enough folic acid *before* pregnancy and in the first few weeks of pregnancy. These defects may happen *before* you know you are pregnant.

Even *before* the sperm and egg meet, women need folic acid, one of the B vitamins. Folic acid helps boost the chances that a growing baby’s brain and spinal cord will form the way it should.

### *Defect threats*

- ❖ Problems of the spinal cord and brain are serious birth defects. A baby with these birth defects needs a lot of care and attention. They may have difficulty learning and with activities such as walking.
- ❖ For most women in Canada, the chance of having a baby with defects of the spinal cord and brain is 1 to 2 in every 1,000 births.
- ❖ If women get enough folic acid, the risk of having a baby with these birth defects is cut in half.
- ❖ Mothers who already have a child with a defect of the spine or brain may need extra folic acid.
- ❖ It is hard to get enough folic acid from the food you eat.
- ❖ Folic acid is an important part of the diet for any women who could become pregnant.

### *Folic acid for beginners!*

If pregnancy is in your future plans, eat foods rich in folic acid and take a vitamin containing folic acid every day.

**Food...** You can get some folic acid by enjoying several servings of foods rich in this vitamin every day. Choices include dark leafy green vegetables, beans, chick peas, lentils, wheat germ, nuts and seeds. Eating foods rich in folic acid is important, but it is not enough.

**Vitamin...** Take a vitamin containing 0.4 mg of folic acid every day. Ask your pharmacist about the best vitamin for you. Start 3 months *before* pregnancy and keep taking folic acid until at least the end of the 3rd month of pregnancy. Talk to your health care provider if morning sickness makes it hard to keep vitamins and food down during the early weeks of pregnancy.





# FOLIC ACID

## *Some need more folic acid than others*

Couples who already have a child with a defect of the spine or brain may worry about this happening again. They need to talk to a genetic counsellor for advice. They also must ask their health care provider about the amount of folic acid they need. Often the mother will be advised to take a higher amount of folic acid. Women with diabetes or epilepsy may also need higher amounts of folic acid. Talk to your pharmacist about the best way to get enough folic acid.

## *Am I getting enough folic acid?*

- ❖ I am taking a folic acid vitamin every day.
- ❖ I eat foods rich in folic acid every day.
- ❖ I will talk to my health care provider about folic acid.

### FOR HELP CLOSE TO HOME CONTACT:

Local public health unit: Call INFOLine at 1-800-268-1154 / 416-341-5518

Health care provider:

Pharmacist:

Genetic counsellor: Canadian Association of Genetic Counsellors or [www.cagc-accg.ca](http://www.cagc-accg.ca)

Dietitian: [www.dietitians.ca](http://www.dietitians.ca)

Folic Acid Alliance: [www.folicacid.ca](http://www.folicacid.ca)



# BEING ACTIVE

## Your moves make better babies

The Canadian Physical Activity Guide recommends that adults get 60 minutes of physical activity every day to stay healthy or to improve your health.

As you progress to moderate activities, you can cut down to 30 minutes a day, 4 days a week. Add up your activities in periods of at least 10 minutes each. Start slowly and build up.

Being active *before* pregnancy can make it easier to stay active during pregnancy. Even a little regular activity can strengthen your heart, body and bones and help keep you at a healthy weight. Being active is a good habit to get into. It is like brushing your teeth; you do it every day to keep healthy. Moving your body can also bring down your stress level. If you are active on a regular basis, your labour and delivery will likely be easier. If you get active now and stay active, you will be a good role model for your children. Being active is important.

Here is how you can get started on being more active...

- ❖ Stand instead of sit.
- ❖ Stroll instead of stand.
- ❖ Walk whenever you can – get off the bus early, use the stairs instead of the elevator.
- ❖ Dance to music – it can liven up housework.
- ❖ Reduce inactivity, like watching TV, for long periods at a time.
- ❖ Choose to walk, wheel or cycle for short trips.
- ❖ Start with a 10-minute walk and gradually increase the time.
- ❖ Do the activities you are doing now, more often.

Choose activities that fit with your lifestyle and that you enjoy. Decide what is right for you. The more activity you do with family or friends, the more fun you may have.





# BEING ACTIVE

## *Turning plans into action*

Use the following chart to plan some future activities. Think about what you would like to do to be active, who you might ask to join you, what may stop you, and how you can make sure you meet your activity goals.

Remember, staying active is part of everyday life that carries with you for years and years to come.

FUN, EASY ACTIVITIES THAT FIT INTO MY EVERY DAY LIFE....	FRIENDS I CAN ENJOY THEM WITH....	SOME BARRIERS THAT MIGHT MAKE IT HARD TO ENJOY MY FAVOURITE ACTIVITIES....	HOW CAN I TAKE CHARGE AND FLY ABOVE THE BARRIERS....
<i>e.g. walk around building at break</i>	<i>co-workers</i>	<i>our schedules</i>	<i>Set a break time in advance</i>

*Note: Activity that is too vigorous can make it hard to get pregnant, especially for women with low body fat. This rare problem is usually short lived and less activity can help. This is not the time to aim for peak physical fitness or train for an athletic event.*

### FOR HELP CLOSE TO HOME CONTACT:

Parks and Recreation Department:

YMCA/YWCA and private Fitness Centres:

Local walking paths or trails:

Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines, <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/paguide/>

Active Ontario, [www.active2010.ca](http://www.active2010.ca)





# ENVIRONMENT



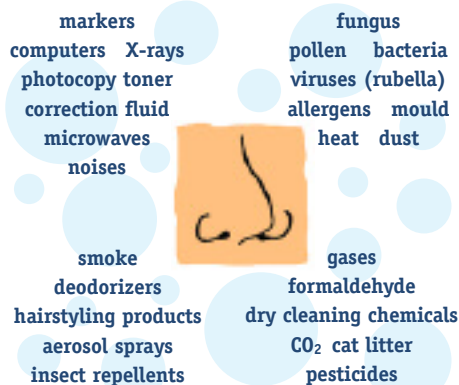
## The world around you and your baby

At no other time are you as aware of the things around you as when you want to become pregnant. You think about what's in the air, in your house cleaners, in the photocopy toners at work—even in a can of hairspray.

Before you get pregnant, you and your partner need to take a closer look at the hazards that may be in your home, workplace and where you spend leisure time. Exposure of men or women to hazards can make it more difficult to get pregnant, and could cause problems during the pregnancy.

### Sniff out the hazards

Most studies on the effects of chemicals, gases or noise on sperm, eggs and the developing baby are still ongoing. When science can't be certain, caution is your best approach. You need to know what part of your environment could affect your health and the health of your future children. Scan your environment to see how many of these items you come in contact with regularly. You can make your own checklist of the things you may want to avoid before your pregnancy and during your pregnancy in order to ensure you are the healthiest parents and have the healthiest baby possible.



### A day in my life...

I need to understand that every day could bring some of the chemicals or agents on the hazards list into my life. I will try to stay away from those so that I don't risk the health of a future pregnancy. I will also ask certain questions so I can make an action plan.

### Do I know enough about a hazard?

If I don't have enough information I can find out more through the "Help is Close to Home" section.

Other ways to get the information I need are....

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### Can I avoid a hazard completely?

Ask...

- ❖ Can the task be done another way, without using the harmful agent?
- ❖ Can someone who is not planning a pregnancy do the task for me?
- ❖ Can my home, workplace or hobbies be set up differently to stop the harmful effects?
- ❖ What can I do to keep from bringing the hazard home to my partner?



# ENVIRONMENT

*If I can't remove the hazard, can I limit the problem?*

Ask...

- ❖ Does the task really need to be done regularly?
- ❖ Can I use special equipment such as gloves and protective clothing to protect myself from the hazard?
- ❖ Can I use less of the agent and still get the job done?
- ❖ Can the workplace be set up differently to reduce harm?

My plans to cut back on hazards are...

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You are the only one who really knows what type of environment you spend your time in every day. You are the best one to make a checklist of possible hazards and talk about possible hazards with the health contacts available to help you. Start now – *before* you get pregnant.

## FOR HELP CLOSE TO HOME CONTACT:

Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System: 1-800-461-4383

Motherisk Home Line: 416-813-6780 or [www.motherisk.org](http://www.motherisk.org)

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety: 1-800-263-8466 or [www.ccohs.ca](http://www.ccohs.ca)

Occupational Health Clinic for Ontario Workers: 416-449-0009 or [www.ohcow.on.ca](http://www.ohcow.on.ca)

## FOR HELP AT WORK CONTACT:

Material Safety Data Sheets at your workplace: \_\_\_\_\_

Employee Assistance Program: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupational Health Nurse: \_\_\_\_\_

Health and Safety Representative: \_\_\_\_\_



# STRESS



## No friend to the sperm or egg

Stress is the way we respond to change. Stress can be good. Think about how winning a lottery might boost your senses. Some people like the feeling of stress and thrill they get from a roller coaster ride or a white-water rafting trip. Yet stress does not always end in this feeling of cheerful excitement. When stressed, our breathing speeds up, muscles tighten, blood pressure rises and our heart pounds faster. The body's reaction to endless stress is puzzling. Both body and mind have limits where stress can become harmful.

Stress could mean the difference between being able to get pregnant or not. Over time, stress can change a woman's biological clock - her menstrual cycles and the timing of an egg being released. In men, stress can play with hormone levels and with the amount of sperm they produce. These changes are short-term and can be turned around once stress is controlled.

### *Your life*

Everyone reacts to stress differently. Understanding how stress affects you is the first step in learning how to manage it.

### *I know I am stressed when...*

- ❖ I feel worried or anxious.
- ❖ I get sick more often.
- ❖ I sleep too much or have trouble sleeping.
- ❖ I can't concentrate or make decisions.
- ❖ I have an unexplained physical problem like headaches, diarrhea or heart flutters.

- ❖ I am too sensitive (I cry or have angry outbursts).
- ❖ I am sad or irritable.
- ❖ My mind wanders throughout the day.
- ❖ My appetite changes.
- ❖ I am unusually tired.
- ❖ I feel restless.
- ❖ I take alcohol, medications or other drugs to relax.
- ❖ Other:

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Your "stress quiz" answers might be a sign that your stress level is too high for your health and well being. You can find ways to manage stress. Below, fill in some that would work for you. Plan to relax!



# STRESS

*When I feel stressed I can....*

Go for a walk with: \_\_\_\_\_

Read a good book or magazine such as: \_\_\_\_\_

Listen to this music: \_\_\_\_\_

Talk to these friends: \_\_\_\_\_

Relax by doing: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

*What is most important in your life?*

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Things that stress me most: \_\_\_\_\_

If I can change them, this is how: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

If I can't change them, this is what I can do: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## FOR HELP CLOSE TO HOME CONTACT:

Health care provider: \_\_\_\_\_

Local public health unit: Call INFOline at 1-800-268-1154 / 416-341-5518

Social worker: \_\_\_\_\_

Family counsellor: \_\_\_\_\_

Psychologist: \_\_\_\_\_

Employee Assistance Program at your workplace: \_\_\_\_\_

### *Did health make your list?*

Finding a balance in life can help us manage stress. Look at your family and work situation and find new ways to share roles or tasks, or learn to make the most of things you can't change. Make changes in your life to decrease stress before pregnancy. Chronic stress along with the lack of social support is related to a baby being born too early or too small.





# FINANCES



## Bringing up baby

Money is often the last thing parents-to-be think about when planning a pregnancy. Toy libraries, hand-me-downs, co-operative baby-sitting and other ideas can make the cost of having a family fit into most of our lives. However, the financial impact that children have on a family is significant and not always easy to balance. You will have a lot to think about *before* you decide to have children. Although it is more pleasant to spend time imagining the joy a child brings, you still need to think about practical stuff too. From clothing, food, schooling, entertainment, careers and time costs, you will want to know how your decision to have a baby will affect your means to live and to raise a child with who you are.

### *Through the years – cost countdown*

Children are expensive. To get through, most parents spend more time on their jobs, don't eat out as much and spend less on themselves. Start thinking about some changes you might be able to make. If your budget is tight, what are some ways you can plan ahead and keep the costs down?

### *Get talking before money speaks*

Consider this:

- ❖ Do you have a steady source of income?
- ❖ Do you have any savings?
- ❖ Are your monthly bills higher than your income?
- ❖ If both of you work, would one of you stop working when the baby comes? For how long? Do you or your partner qualify for maternity/parental leave?
- ❖ If both of you stay at work, who will care for the baby and what will it cost?
- ❖ What part of your world would change? Think about entertainment, sports, activities, time and energy.
- ❖ What are the most important material things to you?
- ❖ Knowing where your money is at, do you need to make any changes in how you spend it?



# FINANCES

## Where does your money go?

Itemize your monthly expenses below:

Housing (mortgage or rent, property taxes and insurance, other) .....	.\$ _____
Utilities (heat, hydro, water, phone, cable TV, other) .....	.\$ _____
Food, supplies and maintenance (groceries, cleaning supplies etc.) .....	.\$ _____
Transportation (car loan, gas, oil, repairs, bus etc.) .....	.\$ _____
Clothing (footwear, clothing, dry cleaning etc.) .....	.\$ _____
Health care (life insurance, dental, medical, vision etc.) .....	.\$ _____
Recreation & entertainment (vacation, hobbies, books etc.) .....	.\$ _____
Extras (gifts, donations etc.) .....	.\$ _____
<b>Total monthly expenses</b> .....	.\$ _____
<b>Total monthly income</b> .....	.\$ _____

## Additional expenses with baby

Itemize the expected baby expenses below:

Baby equipment (crib, car seat, stroller, etc.) .....	.\$ _____
Furniture .....	.\$ _____
Diapers (cloth or disposable) .....	.\$ _____
Feeding baby .....	.\$ _____
Clothing .....	.\$ _____
Toys .....	.\$ _____
Child care .....	.\$ _____
Health needs .....	.\$ _____
Other .....	.\$ _____
<b>Total extra baby expenses</b> .....	.\$ _____

*(Remember, you need to consider what a baby really needs and what you think he or she needs. There is a lot of influence from family, friends and advertisers. For example, an approved infant car seat is mandatory in the province of Ontario, but an infant swing is not. Breastfeeding and making your own baby food is much cheaper and healthier for you baby than formula feeding and commercial baby food.)*

### FOR HELP CLOSE TO HOME CONTACT:

Bank manager: \_\_\_\_\_

Credit counselling: \_\_\_\_\_

Financial consultant: \_\_\_\_\_

Library: \_\_\_\_\_

Family/friends: \_\_\_\_\_

## Keep dollars from steering your future family

It is true that parents with more money find it easier to give their children the things they want and need. People, who are not as financially sound, can, still find a way to care for a baby. Talk to those who've been through the changes you are only imagining right now.



# FERTILITY

## Physical examination

Before you and your partner start trying to get pregnant, it is important to book a health before pregnancy check-up with your health care provider. **Both men and women** benefit from a check-up prior to pregnancy. If you or your partner has not had infections such as chicken pox or rubella (German measles), you need to be immunized before pregnancy. Screening for sexually transmitted infections can also be done. If you have had problems with a previous pregnancy, have a medical condition or are taking drugs, you may need specialized care before, during and after pregnancy.

While you are booking your health before pregnancy check-up with your health care provider, book one with your dentist. Dental problems and infections can lead to serious consequences for both the mother and the baby during pregnancy. It is best to ensure your dental health before conception.

### *Are my eggs ready yet?*

Much goes on when you start getting ready to have children. You and your partner have a lot to think about and to discuss. You search for family planning tips. You start asking friends for what they know about babies. But pregnancy becomes more real as you start preparing your body for pregnancy.

Barrier methods such as condoms, diaphragms and sponges stop the sperm from reaching the egg but do not interfere with ovulation. An egg is still released each month. When you have thought things through and are ready to get pregnant, simply stop using these forms of birth control.

### *From pill to pregnancy*

If you have been using birth control pills, you may have questions. “*When do I stop taking the pill? What should I know?*”

There are many different kinds of birth control pills. That is because women’s bodies are not all the same – you really are one of a kind. So you can expect that your body will have its own unique way of responding when you stop taking the pill.

There is no way to tell how long it will take you to get pregnant based on the time you have been on the pill or the kind of pill you use. But some basic information can be counted on to help ease your mind while you make your way to parenthood.

### *The sunny-side up!*

- ❖ You do not have to wait for the pill to leave your system before you try to get pregnant.
- ❖ More than 98% of women will ovulate (release an egg) within 3 to 6 months after stopping the pill.
- ❖ A small number of women might find it takes longer to get pregnant. This is not linked to using the birth control pill.





# FERTILITY

## *Baby in waiting... staying with birth control*

If you decide to use another type of birth control for a while after you go off the pill, you will need to find out...

- ❖ About all the choices that would suit your needs and your partner's needs
- ❖ How to use the different forms of birth control
- ❖ How much each costs
- ❖ Where to buy birth control
- ❖ How well the different birth control methods work

Talk to your health care provider about bridging the gap between the pill and pregnancy with other birth control.

## *Other forms of birth control*

If you want to get pregnant and you are using another form of birth control such as hormone injections, implants, patches or an IUD, talk to your health care provider. In order for ovulation to occur, these birth control methods will need to be removed or stopped.

## *The time is now*

Are you ready to handle pregnancy when it happens – either right away or sometime in the next year? To know for sure, make these plans:

- ❖ I will set up realistic time frames. I will be ready if pregnancy happens quickly. But if pregnancy takes many months, I will be prepared for the time that it takes.
- ❖ I will learn more about what affects my ability to get pregnant – my fertility.

- ❖ I will be open with my partner about my feelings towards birth control and how we can handle it together.

- ❖ I will ...

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## *Getting egg and sperm together*

Your body is like a clock. We hear this so often that we might not stop to think about how true it is. And for most couples that are trying to get pregnant, the clock can be counted on to know when it has the best chance for an egg to meet some sperm. This union means fertility – it means you can get pregnant. Because you can chart fertility, you can plan a pregnancy to happen when your body, relationships and your life are at their healthiest.



# FERTILITY

## *The “egg timer”*

If you want to become pregnant, you will want to have sex during your most fertile time – during ovulation. But when is this? You can predict it. Track your periods for more than 2 months. Any calendar will do. The more menstrual cycles you track, the more likely you will be able to see your pattern of fertility.

1. Decide how many months you want to track.
2. Put a “P” on the days you have your period each month, starting with the first day you bleed.
3. Count the number of days in each cycle. Count from the 1st day of one period to the day the next period begins. Write this number down under each month in your calendar.
4. Next count back 14 days from the start of each period for every month you tracked. Mark an X. The X marks the days you are most likely to have released an egg during that cycle. You should also mark an X on the other possible fertile days. This could be 2 days earlier or 2 days later. As each one of us is unique, it is often difficult to pinpoint the exact day and is helpful to mark all of these days as possibly fertile.
5. Pay attention to your vaginal discharge. Fertile mucus is clear, sticky and there’s lots of it! The only time of the month you have this particular discharge is during ovulation.

## *What all couples should know*

- ❖ 95% of healthy couples under the age of 35 are able to get pregnant within 1 year of trying.
- ❖ Pregnancy is more likely to happen when sex takes place around the time that an egg is released from the ovary.
- ❖ After an egg is released it lives for about 24 hours.
- ❖ Sperm can live up to 5 days in a woman’s reproductive tract.
- ❖ A woman is most likely to release an egg (ovulate) 14 days before the start of her period.
- ❖ Having sex too often can decrease sperm counts in men. If you are trying to get pregnant, have sex every couple of days around the time of ovulation.
- ❖ Women can track menstrual cycles (periods) to tell when ovulation happens for them. Learn more about your own fertility pattern.
- ❖ Healthy eating, getting enough sleep, being active and getting a handle on stress helps to keep your sex organs healthy.





# FERTILITY

## *Regular vs. irregular*

❖ How long are your cycles (from the start of 1 period to the start of the next period)?

Are they about the same length each month? If yes, then your periods are “regular” and ovulation is easier to predict because it happens close to the same time each cycle.

Do your cycles vary a lot in length? Then they are irregular, making it harder to know when ovulation will occur.

❖ Which day did you ovulate in each cycle if you count from the first day of each period? You’re most fertile time starts a day or 2 before your ovulation day and ends a day or 2 after.

Does this number stay the same each cycle? Then you are regular.

Is this number different each cycle? This makes it harder to predict when you will ovulate, but not impossible.

## *Changing cycles*

Some women do not have regular cycles – here is an example: over 3 months you find one cycle is 28 days long, another is 24 and another is 36 days long. For each cycle subtract 14 days to find out when you may have ovulated.

### **28 day cycle – 14 = 14**

In this cycle, you likely ovulate on the 14th day after the start of your period.

### **24 day cycle – 14 = 10**

In this cycle, you likely ovulate on the 10th day after the start of your period

### **36 day cycle – 14 = 22**

In this cycle, you likely ovulate on the 22nd day after the start of your period.

You now know you release an egg (you are fertile) sometime between day 10 and day 22 after the beginning of your period. The egg lives only 24 hours, but because sperm can live up to 5 days, the day you have sex is not the only time when the sperm and egg can meet.

When you have irregular cycles, you will find it much harder to figure out fertile times than someone with regular cycles. You might want to look into other ways of predicting your fertile times, such as measuring your body temperature and watching for changes in discharge from the vagina. All details of fertility tracking are hard to piece together so it is a good idea to review your pregnancy plans with people who work on fertility issues.

## FOR HELP CLOSE TO HOME CONTACT:

Health care provider: \_\_\_\_\_

Local public health unit: Call INFOline at 1-800-268-1154 / 416-341-5518 \_\_\_\_\_

Community health centre: \_\_\_\_\_

Fertility clinic: \_\_\_\_\_

Library: \_\_\_\_\_



# AGE



## Your body gets in on the baby decision

How does your age affect the health of a pregnancy and a future baby? Is there a prime time to put your sperm or eggs to biological use? Many of us might like to think the answer is as simple as a 5 year age span (age 25-30) – so the decision of when to have kids is not so hard to make. Our bodies make it for us. But that is not so. Older can work. And younger can work. But the body has its limits. Just because you can become pregnant, that does not mean the pregnancy will be a healthy one.

### *Biological clock – antique or younger model?*

Most women and men at any age have healthy uncomplicated pregnancies and healthy babies. But you might want to think about the facts below before making your decision.

- ❖ A pregnant woman in her teens, whose body is still growing and developing, might compete with a growing baby for food and energy.
- ❖ Your chances of getting pregnant are higher before your mid-thirties. Between the 30's and 40's your reproductive system will naturally age.
- ❖ Both mothers and fathers over age 40 have an increased chance of having a child with Downs Syndrome.

- ❖ Problems during pregnancy like diabetes and high blood pressure happen more often with older women.

### *The test of time – or age*

Check the word that makes the statement true for you.

- ❖ Because of my age it  *may*  *may not* be difficult to get pregnant and carry it through.
- ❖ My age  *does*  *does not* increase the chance of problems throughout pregnancy and birth.
- ❖ My body  *has*  *has not* finished developing.
- ❖ I  *am*  *am not* in an age group more likely to be poorly nourished (teens).
- ❖ I  *am*  *am not* at an age which has allowed me to develop responsibility and mature decision making skills through life experiences such as education, care of other family members and employment.

How did you do? There are no right answers or wrong answers to the statements above. You and your pen will have helped you discover how close you are to making a decision about building a family that is best for you.

### *My age won't matter if...*

- ❖ I understand how my age can affect my pregnancy.
- ❖ I have a healthy lifestyle that will help prevent pregnancy problems related to age risks.
- ❖ I will talk to a health care provider before making my final decision to try to conceive a baby.
- ❖ I will read more about age and pregnancy, including information about being ready for parenting, finances, fertility, tobacco, drugs and beliefs about parenting.
- ❖ I will talk to my partner about how a child might fit into our lives at different ages and stages of our personal and work life.

### FOR HELP CLOSE TO HOME CONTACT:

Health care provider: \_\_\_\_\_

Local public health unit: Call INFOLine at 1-800-268-1154 / 416-341-5518 \_\_\_\_\_

Genetic clinic: \_\_\_\_\_

Fertility clinic: \_\_\_\_\_



# FOR MEN ONLY



## “We are pregnant”

Yes, you are a big part of it. Your partner is not the only one who gets pregnant – so to speak. But let’s step back. As a man, you are by no means a silent partner in the making of a baby. Just think about the mechanics of getting your sperm into the right place at just the right time. Then you might wonder if you are ready for the outcome of that act. You have more to consider than you might think. Take your overall health for example. The choices you make speak volumes about whether you will even be able to create a baby.

### *Desperately seeking semen*

The average healthy man can usually count on his sperm to do its job, but someone with a history of infections, drinking and smoking might be dealing with a different quality of sperm. Other lifestyle habits, your environment, as well as disease, can also be “sperm-unfriendly.”

❖ **Booze news...** alcohol can change the quality of sperm. Although alcohol may boost the sex drive, drinking has been linked to poor sexual performance.

❖ **Sperm that really smoke...** what good are lots of sperm if only a few work well? Smoking can make it harder for a man to get an erection. The sperm also can’t swim as fast to reach the “ready” egg. Smokers’ sperm has a harder time getting into the woman’s egg to create a pregnancy.

❖ **The right stuff...** you are what you eat. The truth behind that saying has not changed for decades. If your body is poorly fed, so are your sperm and sex drive.

❖ **Out of it...** cocaine, heroin and high doses of marijuana can kill sexual interest, sexual performance and sperm count.

❖ **Working grind...** sperm can be affected by toxins or poisons in your environment. You might face these on the job or at home and not realize it. Toxins before pregnancy could mean birth defects later.

❖ **What’s up doc?** Some medication and diseases take on a new meaning when baby planning. Cancer, mumps, diabetes, Hepatitis B, sexually transmitted infections and HIV can affect your chances for making pregnancy happen or having a healthy baby.



# FOR MEN ONLY

## Wanted! Newborn looking for a great life & loving dad

Men, who are ready to become involved parents, give their children a head start over those children whose dad's fear the leap into fatherhood. How do you feel?

### *The fatherhood test!*

Ask yourself...

1. Could I handle a child and a job at the same time? Do I qualify for a parental leave?
2. Would I be ready for changes to the daily routine to accommodate the baby's needs?
3. Can I afford to support a child? Do I know how much it costs to raise a child?
4. Do I want to raise a child where I live now? Would I be willing and able to move?
5. Do I like children? How do I feel about having a child around all the time?
6. Am I patient enough to deal with the noise and the confusion and the 24 hour a day responsibility? What kind of time and space do I need for myself?
7. Do I want to become a father some day?

### *Talk it out*

- ❖ Talk with your partner about this life-changing decision.
- ❖ Speak out about how ready you are to become a parent.
- ❖ Voice concerns as you think about them.
- ❖ Make sure you understand, support and believe in each other.
- ❖ Sort out how your work and starting a family might conflict.
- ❖ Bring some work colleagues together to promote a healthy workplace that supports the needs of fathers.

### *Make plans to...*

- ❖ Research your family history for possible genetic concerns.
- ❖ Have regular medical check ups.
- ❖ Review and understand your rights and the possible risks at work.
- ❖ Be aware of possible environmental risks in your home and through your hobbies.
- ❖ Eat well, exercise regularly and don't abuse alcohol or drugs.

### FOR HELP CLOSE TO HOME CONTACT:

Health care provider: \_\_\_\_\_

Local public health unit: Call INFOline at 1-800-268-1154 / 416-341-5518 \_\_\_\_\_

Sexual health clinic: \_\_\_\_\_

Groups or programs for fathers: \_\_\_\_\_

Fertility clinic: \_\_\_\_\_

Genetic clinic: \_\_\_\_\_



# HIV/AIDS



## The equal opportunity illness

So much has been said about AIDS but much is misunderstood – such as whose illness is it anyway? AIDS does not belong to any one sex, age, race or country.

HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, is spread through direct contact with blood and bodily fluids. The virus can be passed on during unprotected sex and while sharing needles or by receiving blood from an infected person. You can have the HIV virus and not even know it - not feel one bit sick. Many women with HIV discover it only after their children are found to have the virus.

If you find out about HIV infection before pregnancy, you can get information on choices about birth control and about having a baby. During pregnancy, there are treatments that can reduce the risk of passing on the virus to your baby.

### Not my problem?

“Not my problem” should not be your first response to a caution about HIV and AIDS, unless you have read the information below and tests have confirmed you are safe to take the next step toward pregnancy. Know your risks for HIV and ask yourself key questions that will let you enter into pregnancy worry-free.

### Must-see facts

- ❖ An infected woman can spread HIV to her baby during pregnancy and delivery.
- ❖ More and more Canadian women are becoming infected with HIV. Canadian women in their childbearing years are at the greatest risk of becoming infected with HIV.
- ❖ A high number of lifetime sexual partners can put a person at greater risk for developing HIV and other sexually transmitted infections – but even people with only 1 sexual partner can be at risk.
- ❖ Little knowledge about your partner’s sexual history and health may put you at risk for infection.
- ❖ Having another sexually transmitted disease such as chlamydia or herpes can increase your risk of also being infected with HIV.
- ❖ Condom use offers important infection protection to people having sex.
- ❖ Injection drug users are at greater risk for HIV. Using a clean (sterile) needle each time and not sharing needles can make it safer.

### Risky business?

HIV attacks a person’s immune system. This makes it hard to fight infections. But if you have HIV, you may not have symptoms. And there is a 25% chance that a mother with untreated HIV can pass the infection to her baby. To know whether you need to be concerned about being infected, answer these statements below:

	Yes	No	Unsure	
I have always had safer sex by insisting on condom use every time. . . . .	■	■	■	<i>If you responded yes to all statements, you are protecting your own health and taking action to create a healthier pregnancy in the future. Great!</i>
My partner and I have only had sex with each other. . . . .	■	■	■	
I have recently been tested for sexually transmitted infections and HIV. . . . .	■	■	■	
My partner has recently been tested for sexually transmitted diseases and HIV. . . . .	■	■	■	
I do not share sex toys. . . . .	■	■	■	
I always use clean needles (ignore if not using needles). . . . .	■	■	■	
My partner always uses clean needles (ignore if partner does not use needles). . . . .	■	■	■	
I did not have a blood transfusion before 1985. . . . .	■	■	■	
My partner did not have a blood transfusion before 1985. . . . .	■	■	■	





# HIV/AIDS

## *The bodyguard*

If you answered “no” or “not sure” to any of the previous statements, think about taking one or more of the following actions to stay as healthy as possible:

- ❖ I will talk with my current partner.
- ❖ I will talk to any partner about past practices and my desire to practice safer sex.
- ❖ I will make appointments to discuss HIV testing with my health care provider or at the sexual health clinic.
- ❖ I will ask my partner to talk to a health care provider or call the sexual health clinic.
- ❖ I will arrange to get clean needles and not share with anyone.

For years, *before* giving birth, women have been screened for hepatitis B, syphilis, and rubella (German measles). Voluntary HIV testing is also offered to women who are planning a pregnancy or who are already pregnant. You have the choice to get HIV tests ordered, using your name or not. It is important to know that you can get tested any time. But *before* pregnancy or early in pregnancy are the best times to take steps to protect both you and your unborn baby.

You do not have to give your name if you want to be tested for HIV. Anonymous testing is available.

### FOR HELP CLOSE TO HOME CONTACT:

Sexual health clinic: \_\_\_\_\_

Health care provider: \_\_\_\_\_

Local public health unit: Call INFOLine at 1-800-268-1154 / 416-341-5518

Ontario HIV/AIDS and Sexual Health Information Line: 1-800-668-2437

Canadian HIV/AIDS Information Centre: 1-877-999-7740 or [www.aidsida.cpha.ca](http://www.aidsida.cpha.ca)

Ontario HIV/AIDS: Main Line (information about needle exchange programs and STDs and injection drug use): 1-800-686-7544

Motherisk, HIV and HIV Treatment in Pregnancy: 1-888-246-5840 or [www.motherisk.org](http://www.motherisk.org)



# SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS



## Silent problem

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are infections passed from one person to another through sexual contact. Take care. Learn about infections *before* you get pregnant to help prevent or treat diseases that could harm your health or a future pregnancy.

- ❖ STIs are a common health problem for both men and women.
- ❖ All STIs can be treated, and most can be cured. In fact, a past STI or herpes that flares up from time to time, will not keep you from having a healthy baby in the future.
- ❖ When infected with an STI, most men and women show no signs of infection.
- ❖ Some untreated STIs, like chlamydia and gonorrhea, may damage a woman's fallopian tubes – the travel route for the egg. This may make it difficult to get pregnant.
- ❖ Other STIs, like herpes and genital warts, may be a factor for increased risk of cervical cancer.
- ❖ Infected mothers can pass on an STI to their baby during pregnancy or childbirth.
- ❖ Hepatitis B is the only STI that can be prevented by vaccine.

### *Your STI safeguard*

Whether planning a pregnancy or not, both men and women can make 2 important decisions. Check your health and know your roles.

#### **1. Make sure the body you have is as healthy as possible before pregnancy**

- ❖ Have regular physical exams
- ❖ Ask your health care provider to test you for STIs—it's not always done
- ❖ For more information contact your local sexual health clinic

*See next page for point #2.*



# SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS

## 2. Know your risks

	Yes	No	Unsure
I have regular physical exams. . . . .	■	■	■
I have always practiced safer sex by insisting on condom use every time. . . . .	■	■	■
My partner has regular physical exams. . . . .	■	■	■
My partner and I have sex only with each other. . . . .	■	■	■
I never had a STI. . . . .	■	■	■
My partner never had a STI. . . . .	■	■	■
My partner has always practiced safer sex in the past. . . . .	■	■	■
I know that using drugs and alcohol can blur my judgement. . . . .	■	■	■
I ask for a STI check if I am with a new partner. . . . .	■	■	■

If your answers to these questions tell you your STI risk is low (you answered “yes” to every question), then your body is likely to be free of infection. **To be sure, be tested.**

If you answered “no” to some questions, don’t despair. We are talking about risk only. Your answers don’t mean there is a problem. They tell you it is time to make some changes to your lifestyle or look for some more information. **To be sure, be tested.**

STIs don’t have to change relationships; you just need to know what they mean for your health, and how you can keep them from happening. You can be treated.

Any “unsure” checks to the questions above? It could be time to talk to your partner or see your health care provider. Your health care provider can talk to you about a Hepatitis B vaccination and testing for STIs, including HIV. Anonymous testing for HIV can be arranged.

Remember to tell your health care provider if you have had an STI so you can plan for a healthy pregnancy.

### FOR HELP CLOSE TO HOME CONTACT:

Health care provider: \_\_\_\_\_

Sexual health clinic: \_\_\_\_\_

Ontario HIV/AIDS and Sexual Health Information Line: 1-800-668-2437

Canadian HIV/AIDS Information Centre: 1-877-999-7740 or [www.aidssida.cpha.ca](http://www.aidssida.cpha.ca)

Ontario HIV/AIDS: Main Line (information about needle exchange programs and STDs and injection drug use): 1-800-686-7544



# READY FOR PARENTING



## Mate matters and more

Many parents will tell you that no matter what you do to get ready for a baby, you will still never be fully prepared for the wonder that enters your life. Most of the surprises are ones that you would not change for the world. But they'll also remind you that you have just accepted the most important change in your life.

Much of the work, care and juggling that goes with parenting needs to be sorted through. Mothers and fathers work together more now to balance jobs with child raising. And even though fathers are taking on a greater role than dads of the past, women still carry most of the family load. Couples still pondering family life are weighing the ups and downs of what could lie ahead.

From the time you learn about a pregnancy until your baby is 18 months old, you can expect to face some tough times in your relationship. Planning and thinking through the idea of parenting *before* pregnancy may be the healthiest way to make sure you are as ready as you can be.

### *Yours, mine & hours*

Newborns feed about 8 to 12 times in a 24-hour period. Do you know how your days and minutes will be filled with schedules that are so demanding? Have you talked to your partner about how you will share the work?

YOU		TASKS	PARTNER	
Time before baby	Time after baby		Time before baby	Time after baby
		<b>Eating</b>		
		<b>Sleeping</b>		
		<b>Hobbies &amp; Fun</b>		
		<b>House cleaning</b>		
		<b>Cooking</b>		
		<b>Grocery shopping</b>		
		<b>Laundry</b>		
		<b>Cutting grass</b>		
		<b>Work</b>		
		<b>Other</b>		
		<b>Feeding baby</b>		
		<b>Diaper baby</b>		
		<b>Washing baby</b>		
		<b>Comforting baby</b>		
		<b>Playing with baby</b>		
		<b>Other</b>		



# READY FOR PARENTING

Keep in mind that, for the first 6 weeks after delivery, the mother is often very busy with important roles such as:

- ❖ Recovering from pregnancy, labour and delivery
- ❖ Attaching and bonding with the baby
- ❖ Establishing breastfeeding

### *Beyond time...what babies really mean to you*

Now put aside your mental picture of the demands a new family member can place on your household and think about the big picture.

On a scale of 1 to 10 rate how a baby might affect your happiness

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10  
 Frustration & anxiety Total happiness

---

On a scale of 1 to 10, rate the amount of conflict you have in your relationship now.

1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9      10  
 Lots of conflict No conflict

Compare your rating with your partner's. Talk about reasons for the rating to see how that guides your decision about having children. If you find your feelings are quite different, now is the time to think about it and work it through.

**FOR HELP CLOSE TO HOME CONTACT:**

Family and friends

Local public health unit

Local Ontario Early Years Centre: 1-866-821-7770

### *Surviving the early stages*

- ❖ Who will do the house cleaning in the first few weeks? Or does it really need to be done?
- ❖ Who will do the laundry in the first week?
- ❖ When will mom have time for her own baths and other care?
- ❖ Who will make the meals?
- ❖ Who will handle the baby's medical check-ups?
- ❖ Whose help will you actively solicit in the first week?
- ❖ How will you spend time together as a couple in the first few weeks?

### *Easing into parenthood...*

- ❖ Ask a public health nurse about services for health before, during and after pregnancy.
- ❖ Chat with parents of young children about what they have been through.
- ❖ Find out about community services for families of young children.
- ❖ Talk to your partner about how you will share the work.
- ❖ Talk to your family about how they can help.





# REACHING OUT TO PLACES, SERVICES AND PEOPLE



## Baby changes everything

We often take for granted where we live. Maybe we don't give much thought to what it takes to get to all the places we need to in a day – to work, to the doctor or the local pharmacy. At least not until we think about a baby and their many needs. Never before did we think about how easily we could get to the closest drugstore for children's cough syrup, diapers, or rash cream. And where will Junior take swimming lessons, go skating and play with friends?

It might not matter today where you live, but when you bring a new life into your world, your

universe will change. Everything you do in a day will seem to relate to how quickly, or easily you can get somewhere with a baby in tow. A lot more planning and thinking ahead will be needed. Think about how to set up your lifestyle to reach out to the places, services and people who are at a distance.

### *Can you get there from here?*

You may want to weigh the ups and downs of living outside a city centre including rural areas or even setting up home in new suburbs that don't yet have full services. Start by finishing the following sentences:

#### **I can....**

Phone to get information about \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Travel (by car, bus or on foot) easily to \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Keep fit by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Connect with my friends by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Get groceries and baby supplies by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Provide opportunities for my baby by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Make healthy meals by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Get information by \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



# REACHING OUT TO PLACES, SERVICES AND PEOPLE

## Phone List

Family and friends

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Neighbour

---

Local public health unit

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Health care provider

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Hospital

---

Pharmacy

---

Child care

---

Drop in centre for parents

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Taxi

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I will need these numbers close by to reach the community services that will help me, wherever I live.

*When it is hard to get where I need to go*

INSTEAD OF:	I CAN:
Driving to the pharmacy	have prescriptions delivered
Regular visits to friends and family	ask friends and family to come to visit
Attending parenting classes	get parenting videos and books
Shopping for baby formula	breastfeed
Frequent trips to the store	stock up on supplies I use often
Driving your children everywhere	set up a car pool
Getting to community centre	provide a range of indoor and outdoor activities

My ideas:

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FOR HELP CLOSE TO HOME CONTACT:
Health care provider:
Local public health unit: Call INFOline at 1-800-268-1154 / 416-341-5518
Local Ontario Early Years Centre: 1-866-821-7770



# BREASTFEEDING



## Nature's gift

Most parents decide how to feed their baby before they are even pregnant. Breast milk is the healthiest choice for a baby. It provides more nutrition and has other benefits than what manufactured formula can offer (no matter what the advertisements tell you). For example, formula fed babies get respiratory infections that require hospitalization more often than breastfed babies. Women who breastfeed have a lower risk of breast cancer.

What you may not have thought about is how your decision to breastfeed will fit into your lifestyle and your community.

You don't want to hide when you and baby are out and need to feed. But will you and everyone around you, feel at ease when you do? Adults eat in public all the time without question; there is no reason why your baby can't do the same thing. The Ontario Human Rights Commission states that no-one can prevent a mother from breastfeeding her baby in a public place or ask her to move to a more private area such as a washroom.

What have you thought about to help make your decision?

### *Simply the best...*

ME			MY PARTNER	
Yes	No		Yes	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Were you breastfed as a baby?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have any of your family or friends breastfed a baby?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Have you seen a mother breastfeed her baby?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you know the risks of formula feeding?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you think a mother can breastfeed in public with few people noticing?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Is breastfeeding the woman's choice?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Does breastfeeding fit with your ideas about parenting?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Breastfeeding is your best choice...but labour and delivery can take its toll. Many new mothers are tired and may become frustrated if they experience any difficulties in breastfeeding. The first response is usually to give the baby a bottle of formula. Just one bottle could affect your breastfeeding success. There

is an art and science to breastfeeding and sometimes mothers and babies need a little time to get it right. The urge to give up can be strong, but with good support and when you remind yourself of the facts about breastfeeding and the risks of formula feeding, you'll stick with it.



# BREASTFEEDING

## *Breastfeeding versus Formula Feeding*

1. Breast milk is baby's best food.
2. Breast milk is easier to digest than formula.
3. Formula feeding is much more expensive than breastfeeding.
4. Breast milk changes, as baby's needs change. Formula stays the same.
5. Formula fed babies have more allergies and problems such as eczema.
6. Breast milk helps guard babies against infection.
7. Breastfeeding is convenient. No bottles or nipples to sterilize. No formula to prepare or keep cool or warm up.
8. Breast milk takes energy to make, so it burns calories and fat. It's easier to lose weight after the baby is born.
9. Breastfeeding is environmentally friendly – no cans or packaging.
10. Formula fed babies have a higher risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.
11. Breastmilk has key ingredients not in formula (again, no matter what the advertisements tell you) that improve brain growth, help babies learn and build social skills.
12. Breastfeeding helps protect mom and baby from cancer – breast, cervix, ovaries and some childhood cancers.

You know it is the best food for baby. You have decided to breastfeed. Breastfeeding can be done anywhere, anytime. And it fits into even the busiest schedule. You can make it work for you and your family. Plan to breastfeed as long as possible, up to at least six months, two years or maybe more. And if you have support to breastfeed, you are more likely to keep it up. Who can you add to your breastfeeding team?

## *Circles of support*

You have lots to learn about breastfeeding. Talk to family, friends and breastfeeding helpers as you think about how you would like to feed your baby.

- ❖ Partner, family and friends
- ❖ Health care provider
- ❖ Breastfeeding support groups
- ❖ La Leche League
- ❖ Public Health Nurse

### FOR HELP CLOSE TO HOME CONTACT:

Local public health unit: Call INFOline at 1-800-268-1154 / 416-341-5518

La Leche League Canada Breastfeeding Referral Service: 1-800-665-4324

Lactation Consultant:

Health care provider:

Breastfeeding clinic:

Support groups:

Hospital:

Library:



# PREGNANCY LOSS



## Feelings & Healing

*“We are so afraid to get pregnant again.”*

You started to buy baby books, pick out names, look at cribs and even spread your good news – you were expecting. But you were not expecting to lose that life that barely had a beginning. Yet 1 in 3 pregnancies end *before* the baby is able to live outside the woman’s body. Even more women go through the loss of pregnancy earlier, within weeks after conception – many without knowing they were pregnant. Reasons for pregnancy loss, including stillbirths and miscarriages, are not always clear.

What helps most people cope with a loss through miscarriage, is knowing that women have a 70% to 80% chance of carrying their next pregnancy to term.

### *Saying goodbye*

Grief is what you go through to re-adjust your life to a loss. Many parents grieve about what the baby “could” have been like. But they can move on. And it takes time.

Women who become pregnant within 6 months of losing a baby can have a harder time with their grief. It may be natural to want to be pregnant again, but it takes time to deal with your feelings. Just as the excitement of pregnancy can be different for men and women, so can the reaction to the loss of the pregnancy. For some men the loss of a pregnancy can be especially difficult if the woman gets all the sympathy and support. Women might have more chances to share their

feelings of sadness and loss than men do. How we work through our feelings of loss is personal. Both partners need to be supportive and try to understand how the other is feeling and how their grieving can differ.

Feelings about pregnancy loss range from sadness, emptiness and loss of hope, to anger and blame. Though there is no clear medical reason to explain many pregnancy losses, parents may feel anxious and direct or accept blame for the event.

### *Second chances*

Being ready for another pregnancy depends on many things – your health, your emotional recovery, your relationship and other issues. Both men and women can handle the fear and anxiety from pregnancy loss better as they learn and share more.

Whether pregnancy loss is from miscarriage or stillbirth, and whether it happened a long time ago or recently, both men and women need to deal with their feelings. They need to know when they are ready to move on – to get pregnant again, if at all. Answers are not always simple. Think about what is best for both of you. There is no right or wrong time to get pregnant again. Every couple is different.





# PREGNANCY LOSS

FOR ME	ARE YOUR ANSWERS IN SYNC OR DO YOU NEED MORE TIME?	FOR MY PARTNER
	Am I as ready as I think I can be to have another pregnancy?	
	Have I been able to honestly voice my feelings to my partner?	
	Do I think my partner and I are at the same place between ready and not ready?	
	Am I thinking about another pregnancy as a way of making my hurt go away?	
	Have I had a good chance to talk about the pregnancy loss with my health care provider?	
	Have my partner and I had a chance to talk about any new information?	
	I am not ready for another pregnancy – I have not dealt with the loss.	

Compare answers and see how “together” you are on your feelings.

Feelings of sadness are normal. Sometimes depression can occur. If you are noticing changes in your normal activities – eating, sleeping, sex, use of alcohol or drugs, or in your relationships or work – seek help. This is a time to take good care of yourself.

Grief is one of the hardest topics to talk about – especially as it relates to the loss of a baby. It is the loss many of us least expect and may be least prepared for. Talking to other women, family and friends, about their experiences with pregnancy loss may help you work through your grief. Remember you do not have to feel alone.

## FOR HELP CLOSE TO HOME CONTACT:

Local public health unit: Call INFOLine at 1-800-268-1154 / 416-341-5518

Health care provider

Counsellor

Perinatal Bereavement Services: 1-888-301-PBSO(7276)



# SAFE RELATIONSHIPS



## Pregnancy demands a harm-free home

When you think about pregnancy you picture love, security and bonds that pull relationships closer. It is every person's right to live in a safe relationship that nurtures and lends support – a relationship free of harm. Now is the time to be sure about your relationship – before you welcome a new life. About 40% of woman abuse starts during a woman's first pregnancy. Emotional abuse often comes first. The woman is insulted, threatened, put down in public, blamed and told what to do. If left unchecked, this control can turn into physical abuse – slapping, hitting, shoving and more. It only gets worse over time.

Why do women suffer abuse? They may become survivors by shutting out their reality. Thoughts like, *"My baby needs a father,"* may keep a woman in a harmful relationship for years. Staying can be what hurts the unborn child the most. Battering can cause miscarriages, premature labour and stillbirths. Women might also turn to drugs or alcohol to cope, putting a developing baby in more danger.

### *Abuse – What are the signs?*

You notice...

Depression

Confusion

Sleep disturbance or nightmares

Unusual physical complaints

Eating disorders

Anxiety or tension

Hopelessness or mood swings

Upsetting flashbacks

### *Unveiling abuse*

Strong differences in beliefs could be warning signals that your relationship could become abusive. Both partners should ask themselves these questions...

- ❖ Is it OK for you to behave in a certain way, but not your partner?
- ❖ Have you ever forced your partner to do something to get what you want?
- ❖ Do you blame your partner for everything that goes wrong?
- ❖ Does your jealousy stop your partner from going places or seeing other people?
- ❖ Do you have set ideas about what each partner should be like or should do?

If you answered yes to any of these questions you might want to take a closer look at your relationship. Facing differences now will be easier than letting them take their toll when a pregnancy comes along.

### *Fill your family album with smiles, not bruises*

Having a baby *does not* make a bad relationship better; it adds to the stress. Start your family in a healthy way. Know your relationship. Your values and beliefs about togetherness tell you how you will treat each other in a relationship. Check the list below to see how your answers compare.



# SAFE RELATIONSHIPS

For me	A great relationship is...	For my partner
<input type="checkbox"/>	Responsibility	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Making decisions for each other	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Caring and sharing	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Feeling safe from harm	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Getting pregnant	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Friendship	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Trust and honesty	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Strong feelings	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Recognizing differences	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Making time only for each other	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dependency	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Compromising	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Feeling free to get as angry as you want	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pleasure	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Obsession	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Commitment	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Discussing feelings, successes, mistakes	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Expressing myself, my thoughts & feelings	<input type="checkbox"/>

## *Pre-parenting promises*

You have certain strengths as a couple now. You can build on those.

- ❖ We would like to get better at... \_\_\_\_\_
- ❖ We would like to first tackle... \_\_\_\_\_
- ❖ We will do these things... \_\_\_\_\_
- ❖ We can count on help from... \_\_\_\_\_

Through this exercise you have had a chance to think about your own relationship. Sadly, it is common to discover a relationship that is destructive and abusive. But remember that your right to freedom from abuse is more valuable than a marriage or relationship that destroys you. Women should never be afraid to reach out for help. Don't feel guilty, ashamed or blame yourself for a failing relationship. Now is the time to make important decisions for yourself and for the health of the baby you are dreaming about.

### FOR HELP CLOSE TO HOME CONTACT:

IF YOU ARE IN DANGER, CALL 911

Health care provider \_\_\_\_\_

Crisis centre \_\_\_\_\_

Sexual assault services \_\_\_\_\_

Women's shelters \_\_\_\_\_

Assaulted Women's Help Line: 1-866-863-0511

If you are an abuser consult, "Canada's Programs for Men Who Abuse Their Partners," <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ncfv-cnivf/familyviolence/pdfs/2002-menwhoabuse.pdf>



# SEARCH AWAY...

## ...For tips to build healthier babies

The information in this workbook is a healthy start for a future baby and a future parent. Its pages cue you on what to think about, before pregnancy.

There is always more to learn and people learn in many different ways. Find out where else you can turn:

- ❖ Check out the “Help is Close to Home” sections in this workbook
- ❖ To contact your local public health unit, 1-800-268-1154
- ❖ Talk to your health care provider
- ❖ Visit your library
- ❖ [www.healthbeforepregnancy.ca](http://www.healthbeforepregnancy.ca)
- ❖ Canadian Health Network at [www.canadian-health-network.ca](http://www.canadian-health-network.ca)

Every health choice you make and every little change you work on now, before pregnancy, makes a difference!



### My notes...

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### Things to talk about...

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### My hopes...

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**Best Start: Ontario's Maternal, Newborn and Early Child  
Development Resource Centre c/o OPC**

**180 Dundas Street West, Suite 1900 Toronto, ON, M5G 1Z8**

**Phone: 416-408-2249 or 1-800-397-9567 Fax: 416-408-2122**

**Email: [beststart@beststart.org](mailto:beststart@beststart.org)**

**[www.beststart.org](http://www.beststart.org)**