

Health Promotion & Program Support

Preparing for Pregnancy: 10 Things You Need to Do

What	Why	How
1. Eliminate alcohol	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Alcohol can cause brain damage and other birth defects.There is no safe level of alcohol during pregnancy.Alcohol can affect sperm quality.50% of pregnancies are unplanned.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Avoid places where alcohol is served.Have a support system.Contact Alcoholics Anonymous 519-337-5211 or www.motherisk.org (Help line: 1-877-327-4636).
2. Take folic acid <u>before</u> getting pregnant	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Folic acid can reduce the risk of brain and spinal cord defects in your baby.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Take a daily multi-vitamin with at least 0.4 mg of folic acid.Eat dark-green, leafy vegetables, dried beans and peas, fortified cereal products, sunflower seeds and certain fruits and vegetables.More info at www.folicacid.ca
3. Stop smoking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reduces fertility in men and women.Smoking lowers sperm quality.Higher risks for a low birth-weight baby and health problems.Greater risk of miscarriage, premature delivery, still birth, tubal pregnancy.Second-hand smoke is just as harmful.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">For local programs, call Community Health Services at 519 344-2062, ext 2350 / 2142 or toll free 1-800-667-1839.Smokers Helpline 1-877-513-5333.More info at http://pregnets.org.
4. Eat healthy foods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Poor food choices by men and women can affect fertility and cause low birth-weight babies.Important nutrients are needed for healthy brain and physical development of the fetus.Avoid dieting before the start of a pregnancy. "Even modest restrictions in maternal nutrition around the time of conception can lead to premature births and long-term adverse health effects for the offspring." (www.womenshealthmatters.ca)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Call Community Health Services at 519 344-2062, ext. 2349 / 2033 or toll free 1-800-667-1839.Find out more about Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide: www.canadasfoodguide.org

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COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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<p>5. Control current medical problems</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some medicines can harm a developing fetus. Safer ones may be available. • Healthy teeth and gums reduce the risk of preeclampsia in pregnancy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss medical conditions with your doctor <i>before</i> getting pregnant. • Discuss medicines with a pharmacist. • Visit www.motherisk.org • See your dentist before pregnancy.
<p>6. Get screened for infections and STIs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certain infections can harm infants (Rubella, HIV, toxoplasmosis, Fifth's Disease, herpes, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk with your doctor about preconception medical screening. • Ensure immunizations are up-to-date.
<p>7. Avoid illicit drugs & herbal remedies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some drugs can affect fertility and sperm quality. • Certain drugs can cause low birth-weight babies and birth defects depending on exposure. • Herbal remedies can have harmful effects. • Baby can become addicted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Men and women should talk with a pharmacist about drugs and herbal remedies if you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant. • Visit www.motherisk.org or call 1-877-327-4636 for more information on drug effects.
<p>8. Understand your environmental & workplace risks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certain chemicals can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Affect fertility ○ Cause birth defects ○ Affect sperm quality ○ Be passed to the fetus at conception and harm the baby. • Some physical hazards - vibrations, x-rays, radiation, too much noise and heat - can affect fertility and harm the fetus. • Some biological agents can cause birth defects, nervous system effects and fetal death. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for the chemicals you handle. • Talk to your employer or safety rep about workplace risks and controls, personal protective equipment, ventilation, job modification, etc. • Visit www.motherisk.org • Avoid hobbies and renovations that may result in exposure to toxins.
<p>9. Have a good support system</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pregnant women without support are at risk for depression and unhealthy behaviours. • 40% of abuse starts during pregnancy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask your family or a friend for help. • Contact the Women's Interval Home at 519 336-5200 or 1-800-265-1412 if you need help.
<p>10. Prepare your body at least 3 months before getting pregnant</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It takes 3 months for sperm to develop. Clear your system of toxins prior to conception. • Be healthy and physically active before getting pregnant for life-long benefits for baby. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk with your doctor and employer about reducing risks. • Find ways to maintain a healthy lifestyle (i.e. join a walking group with friends or family).