

#	Age & Stage	Theme	Title
1	Preconception	Future mothers' health	Did you know that the brain of a future baby can be affected by the mother's health, even before she gets pregnant?

It is best to make changes when you are thinking about becoming pregnant. If you are planning a pregnancy, it is best to:

- ◆ Avoid alcohol.
- ◆ Avoid exposure to tobacco smoke.
- ◆ Talk to your health care provider or contact Motherisk about the drugs, vitamins and herbal treatments that you use.
- ◆ Stop using recreational drugs such as marijuana and cocaine. These may affect the quality of the eggs. The effects of recreational drugs may not be identified immediately after birth. The effects may show up at a later date in the form of learning disabilities.
- ◆ Make healthy food choices by following Canada's Food guide. This will affect how well your baby develops and grows and how healthy you feel.
- ◆ Reduce the risk of problems with your baby's brain and spine. Take a multivitamin with folic acid every day. Start at least three months before you get pregnant. Some women need more folic acid than others. Talk to a genetics counsellor or your health care provider for advice.
- ◆ Be active regularly. The Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines recommend that adults get at least 2.5 hours of moderate to vigorous physical activity per week. Be active for at least 10 minutes or more at a time.
- ◆ Find out about your own health and your family's health history. High blood pressure, arthritis, depression, cancer, mumps, diabetes and Hepatitis B can affect your chances of having a healthy baby. Contact your health care provider or a genetics clinic if there are any family medical conditions you are concerned about such as severe allergies, heart malformations or mental health concerns.
- ◆ Take a look at the toxic substances that may be in your home, workplace and where you spend leisure time. These may include lead, mercury, solvents, cleaning products, pesticides, artificial fragrances and other toxins. Scientific research is done to better understand the effects of various chemicals. Some may affect hormones, ovules, sperm and the developing baby. When science can't be certain, caution is your best approach.
- ◆ If you are exposed to potentially harmful substances at work, talk with your employer about alternative arrangements.
- ◆ At home, decide if products such as harsh cleaners, air fresheners, dry cleaning chemicals and pesticides are really necessary. Consider using simple, non-toxic products, such as baking soda and vinegar, for routine cleaning. Arrange for others to perform tasks that could put you and your future baby in contact with harmful chemicals. One example is changing the vacuum cleaner bag.
- ◆ Avoid renovating your home if you may be pregnant or have young children. If renovation work must be done, plan to be away for the duration of the work. Return only once all dust has been thoroughly cleaned up and all fumes have cleared.

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- ◆ Ensure your immunizations are up to date. Get immunized for chicken pox and rubella (German measles) if you have not had those infections.
- ◆ Get screened for sexually transmitted infections. Talk to your partner about sexually transmitted infections.

Now is a great time to make positive changes in your habits for both you and your partner. This will give you good health before you conceive, and create healthy habits for your future growing family.

Links

- ◆ *Is there a baby in your future? Plan for it.* Best Start Resource Centre. www.healthbeforepregnancy.ca
- ◆ *Creating Healthy Home Environments for Kids: Top 5 Tips.* Canadian Partnership for Children's Health & Environment. www.healthyenvironmentforkids.ca
- ◆ Motherisk. 1-877-439-2744. www.motherisk.org