



# 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.



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## *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) \_\_\_\_\_