

Health Unit Media Release



Contact: Denise Kall, Public Health Nurse, Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit,
Kemptville Office 613-258-5941

Father's Health is Just as Important when Planning a Pregnancy

A recent telephone survey of men and women between the ages of 25 and 45 found that:

- Ontarians feel that the first things for men to think about before pregnancy include saving money and having a good, stable job.
- Ontarians feel that women should eat well, take care of themselves and make sure they have good overall health before becoming pregnant.

Many Canadians wait until they have a positive pregnancy test before they make changes to their health & lifestyle. **Babies begin to grow before women know they are pregnant. Waiting for a positive pregnancy test is often too late to prevent some risks to the baby's health.** Before a woman gets pregnant is the time to prepare for a baby's health.

A man's health is also important when planning a baby. His health and lifestyle choices play an important part – both in getting pregnant and in preparing for a healthy baby.

Both a healthy sperm and egg are needed for a healthy baby. There are things that both men and women can do for their future children. **Things like nutrition, physical activity, smoking, alcohol, drugs, caffeine and sexually transmitted infections all need to be considered for both the father and the mother prior to pregnancy.** For both parents, issues such as stress, family history and environmental hazards can have an impact on the health of a baby.

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

Most couples plan for work, buying a home, holidays and retirement. It would be ideal for more couples to plan before pregnancy, since it can make such a big difference to the health of their baby. It is important to talk to a health care provider about 3 months before pregnancy.

For more information about improving your lifestyle before pregnancy:

Call the Health Action Line: 1-800-660-5853 or 345-5685

Visit: www.healthbeforepregnancy.ca

www.healthunit.org

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