

GIVING BIRTH IN A NEW LAND

A guide for women new
to Canada and their families



Part 3 – Getting ready for the baby

You are pregnant. Congratulations!

This resource will help you learn more about having a baby in Canada. The way things happen here may be different from the country you came from. This resource focuses on Ontario.

There are 4 parts to this resource. This is part 3 of 4. All the parts can be downloaded at www.beststart.org/resources/rep_health.

Make sure you have access to the information you need.

- Part 1: Getting the help you need
- Part 2: Finding the health care you need during pregnancy
- **Part 3: Getting ready for your baby**
- Part 4: Having your baby

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Prenatal classes

Prenatal classes are generally offered:

- to people having their first baby; and
- to people giving birth in Canada for the first time.

They are offered in most parts of Ontario.

The program topics may vary from place to place. Most of the time, the topics include healthy eating, exercise during pregnancy, signs of problems, the stages of labour, pain control, childbirth, breastfeeding, and learning to be a parent.

- Your health care provider should be able to help you find prenatal classes in your area.
- Classes are sometimes offered by public health units, community health centres, hospitals, or community colleges. Some classes can be done on the internet.
- Ask what the cost will be to attend the classes. Some are free, some are low cost, and some are more expensive. Some do not charge pregnant women who have very low incomes.
- Husbands or partners are encouraged to attend prenatal classes. A family member such as your mother, sister, or friend may also attend classes with you. It is best if the person who will be with you during childbirth attends prenatal classes with you.

Healthy Eating for a Healthy Baby

This booklet provides information about healthy eating for pregnant women. You can get it from your local public health unit or you may download it from www.beststart.org/resources/nutrition.



Nutrition and supplements

- It is important to eat well before, during, and after your pregnancy. Try to eat a variety of healthy foods. **Canada's Food Guide** can help you learn about healthy eating. It is available in many languages at www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php, or by calling 1-866-225-0709.
- You should also take a prenatal vitamin that contains folic acid. It is possible to buy vitamins that are Halal and Kosher. Ask your pharmacist or health care provider.
- If you cannot afford to buy the food you need, you may go to a Food Bank. For a list of Food Banks in Ontario, go to www.oafb.ca and select "Find a Food Bank." You can also call 1-866-220-4022.
- Milk and alternatives will give you and your baby strong bones and teeth. They are important for good nutrition. If you do not like to drink milk, you can eat yogurt and cheese, kefir, chocolate milk, puddings, cream soups, fortified soy beverages, or orange juice with added calcium. Eating fish with the bones such as canned salmon and sardines or making soup stock from fish bones are other ways to get the calcium your baby needs.
- Fish is very healthy. It may be a food that you eat a lot, depending on your culture. Continue to eat fish while you are pregnant, but limit the amount of fish that contains high levels of mercury. For more information, download the brochure **A Guide to Eating Fish for Women, Children and Families** from Toronto Public Health at www.toronto.ca/health/fishandmercury/advice_eat_fish.htm.



- There are certain foods you should avoid during pregnancy, especially those that may contain bacteria and parasites. Do not eat raw fish and seafood, meat that is not fully cooked, raw or undercooked eggs, unpasteurized milk products, unpasteurized juices, and raw sprouts.
- You may know of traditional medicines, herbs, and teas that are used by pregnant women in your culture. Even if these are natural, talk to your health care provider about them, to make sure they will not harm you or your baby. You can also call **Motherisk** at 1-877-327-4636. This service is free.
- To keep your baby safe, drink less than one or two cups of coffee per day. Remember that tea, chocolate, energy drinks, and many sodas also have caffeine, so your intake should be limited.
- The Canadian government has **Prenatal Nutrition Programs** to help women buy healthy foods and get prenatal vitamins. The people who work in these programs can also help you learn to cook local foods. You can find a program near you by phoning your local public health unit. It is also a good way to meet other pregnant women who live near you.
- Women who receive social assistance and are pregnant or breastfeeding may be able to receive a supplement through Ontario Works. Information is available at www.mcsc.gov.on.ca/documents/en/mcsc/social/directives/ow/0605.pdf or by calling Service Ontario at 1-800-267-8097.

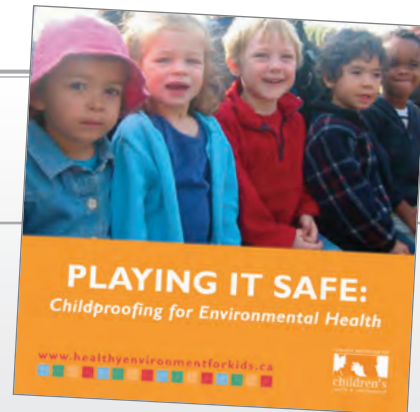
Physical activity

- Pregnant women are encouraged to be active. A daily walk can be good for you and your baby. Talk to your health care provider about the types of activities that are safe and healthy for you.
- It is sometimes very cold in the winter in Canada. If you dress warmly, you will feel comfortable outside and the cold will not seem so harsh.
- Many shopping malls are a good place to walk indoors. Sometimes, people set up walking groups inside the malls. This is a good way to meet new people.
- When you are pregnant, you should not get too hot when you exercise. Do not go into hot tubs or saunas.
- Some exercise classes are just for pregnant women. Ask about prenatal exercise classes at your community recreation centre.
- If you have questions, call the **Exercise & Pregnancy Helpline** at 1-866-937-7678.



Playing it Safe: Childproofing for Environmental Health

This brochure contains information to help you make your home safer. You can get a copy from your local public health unit or download it from www.beststart.org/resources/env_action



Environmental issues

- Tell your health care provider about the type of work that you do, to make sure it is safe in pregnancy. In Canada, you cannot lose your job just because you are pregnant.
- Cat feces may contain dangerous parasites. You should not touch cat litter when you are pregnant. Have someone else empty the litter box. Use gloves when you are working in the garden in case there are animal feces in the dirt.
- To learn more about workplace risks for pregnant women, contact the **Occupational Health Clinic for Ontario Workers** (www.ohcow.on.ca), 1-877-817-0336. Contact **Motherisk** if you have questions about products you are exposed to during pregnancy such as chemicals or pesticides (www.motherisk.org), 1-877-439-2744. This service is free.

Exposure to alcohol, drugs, and tobacco

- Women should not drink alcohol or use illegal drugs when they are pregnant, such as marijuana, cocaine, etc. They can harm the brain of the growing baby.
- Tobacco smoke is harmful to the baby's development. It is better not to smoke and to avoid being in places where other people smoke. In Ontario, it is now illegal to smoke in a car if children under age 16 are also in the car.

Work & Pregnancy Do Mix

This brochure contains general information on working during pregnancy. You can get a copy from your local public health unit or download it from www.beststart.org/resources/wrkplc_health.



- Talk to your health care provider about any medication before you take it. This includes herbal or natural medicines. Some may not be good for your growing baby.
- If you need to buy medicine from the shelves in a drug store (over-the-counter medicine), first ask the pharmacist if it is okay for pregnant women to use this medicine.
- Your health care provider should be aware of **any medication** you are taking.
- If you are having trouble not taking alcohol, drugs, or tobacco, talk to your health care provider who may be able to help you. In Canada, all health care providers and pharmacists are required to keep personal information private. You can also call **Motherisk** for answers to your questions about drug and alcohol safety, at 1-877-327-4636.



Planning for the baby's birth

While you are pregnant, there are many things you can do to plan for the birth of your baby:

- Think of how you can get to the hospital quickly when you go into labour. Plan for at least two people who can help you get there. If you are planning to use a taxi, make sure you have cash to pay for it.
- If necessary, you can go to the hospital by ambulance but you may need to pay for that service.
- If you have other children at home, make plans about who will care for them while you are in the hospital. You cannot bring your children to the hospital when you deliver the baby. Make sure you have at least two people who can take care of your children when you go into labour. If you do not have someone who can care for your children during this time, talk to your health care provider in advance. If you have pets at home, make sure someone can look after them.
- Decide who will be your labour support person. It can be your husband, partner, your mother, a relative, or a friend. You can also hire a doula, who can provide comfort to you during labour. Choose someone that you trust and who can help you make good decisions along the way.
- Write your birth plan and discuss it with your health care provider before the time comes to go to the hospital. Make sure your support person also knows your wishes and agrees to help you with your choices.

- In Canada, circumcision is not usually done for newborn boys. If you want it done for your baby, talk to your health care provider. You can learn more about this subject at www.caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/circumcision.
- It is important to consider the benefits of breastfeeding while you are pregnant. Ask your health care provider any questions you may have. Discuss what you prefer with your family and friends. Breastfeeding is commonly done in Canada and it is a mother's right to breastfeed in public. Breast milk is the best food you can give your baby and it is free.



Equipment for your baby

Some baby care equipment is necessary and some is just nice to have. The safety of your baby is the most important thing to think about when you buy any equipment.

- You may want to buy used equipment. Make sure it meets all the current safety standards. Health Canada has a website that explains how to choose baby and child care equipment. (www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/pubs/cons/child-enfant/safe-secure-eng.php)
- In many parts of the province, there are groups that lend child care equipment or sell it at a low cost. Your public health unit may be able to help you find these groups. Your Ontario Early Years Centre may also have access to this equipment. (www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/phu/locations.aspx) (www.ontario.ca/earlyyears)

- When you leave the hospital, you will need to have a car seat for your baby, even if you do not own a car. Your car seat should have a Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (CMVSS) sticker and cannot be older than 10 years. If you find it difficult to put the car seat safely into your vehicle, contact your local public health unit. (www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/phu/locations.aspx)
- For the first 6 months, the safest way for your baby to sleep is on his back, in a crib in your room. The crib must meet safety standards and should not have pillows, bumper pads, stuffed toys, or blankets. Any of these could cover the baby's face and prevent him from breathing. Cribs made before September 1986 do not meet current safety rules and should NOT be used.
- The **Canadian Paediatric Society's** website for parents has good information on keeping babies safe. (www.caringforkids.cps.ca/keepkidssafe/KeepBabySafe.htm)
- **Parachute** offers online resources in multiple languages about child safety. Call 1-888-537-7777 if you have a question about child safety. (www.parachutecanada.org/resources)

Is Your Child Safe?

You can download this brochure on safe products for babies and children from www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cps-spc/alt_formats/pdf/pubs/cons/child-enfant/child-Safe-enfant-securite-eng.pdf or call the Product Safety Office at 1-866-662-0666.



Keep Kids Safe

Visit the website "Keep Kids Safe" to find out what types of car seat are required in Ontario for babies and children (www.tc.gc.ca/eng/roadsafety/safedrivers-childsafety-car-time-stages-1083.htm). Explanation on safe installation is also provided.

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