



My Reproductive Life Plan

This reproductive life plan is for adults. It will help you to understand how to protect your ability to have children, think about when to have children and how to have the healthiest baby possible when you're ready.

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Is Having Children One of Your Life Goals?

The future that you imagine and the goals that you set for yourself may or may not include having children. Check the sentence below that best describes you right now. (Your goals and your life can always change.)



I'm not planning to have children.

Visit Sexuality and U for information about birth control and sexual health.
www.sexualityandu.ca



I'm ready to have children now.

Read the following planning a pregnancy resources:

- Health Before Pregnancy – Workbook
www.beststart.org/resources/rep_health/Health_Before_pregnancy_2011_FULL.pdf
- Men's Information: How to Build a Healthy Baby www.beststart.org/resources/preconception/men_health_bro_2012.pdf
- Waiting for Baby: Pregnancy after Age 35
www.beststart.org/resources/rep_health/pdf/pregnancy35plus_12pg_book.pdf



I may want to have children or another child someday, but not right now.

Continue reading this booklet.



My Reproductive Life Plan

You can decide **if** and **when** to have children. Check the sentence below that best describes your goals right now or write your own sentence. Then write the steps you will take to meet this goal. This is your **reproductive life plan**.

Example 1: I am not sure if I want to have children, so I will *continue to practice safer sex and learn about long-term birth control options*.

Example 2: I want to have children someday but not now, so *I will talk to my health care provider about how having children might be possible for me as I identify as LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or queer)*.

☐ I am not sure if I want to have children, so I will

☐ I want to have a child in the next year, so I will

☐ I want to have children someday but not now, so I will

☐ I am planning on adopting/fostering children, so I will

☐ I am concerned about my fertility (ability to make a baby) and I'm not sure I can have children, so I will

☐ _____

(Write your own plan)

Your reproductive life plan may change. That's okay! You can update your plan at any time. If you want to have a child or another child one day or you want to keep your options open, take steps to improve your health, protect your fertility and improve your chances of having a healthy baby.

Did you know?

Almost half (50%) of all pregnancies are unplanned. An unplanned pregnancy is a pregnancy that is unintended and can happen even when birth control is being used. If you plan a pregnancy, you have time to make sure you are healthy and prepared before it happens.

»» **FACT**

The next five sections will help you think about things that you can do now to:

- Improve your health,
- Protect your fertility, and
- Improve the health of a baby.

My Physical Health

Taking care of your physical health can improve your overall health, protect your fertility and improve your chances of having a healthy baby.

When did you last visit your health care provider (doctor, nurse)?

TIP

Ask your health care provider how often you should visit for preventative screening. If you have a health condition like diabetes, high blood pressure, or obesity you may need to visit more often.



Are your vaccines (immunizations) up-to-date? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I'm not sure.

TIP

Check with your health care provider to make sure your immunizations are up to date.

If you are a woman, do you take a multivitamin with folic acid? ☐ Yes ☐ No

TIP

Taking a multivitamin with at least 0.4 mg of folic acid each day can prevent birth defects. Because so many pregnancies are unplanned, it's best to take it daily for as long as you are able to conceive (get pregnant). Some women need more folic acid. Talk to your health care provider to find out how much folic acid is right for you.

What medications and herbal/natural supplements do you take?

TIP

Medications and herbal remedies can affect your fertility and pregnancy. Share a list of all medications and supplements you take with your health care provider. Include medications that have a doctor's prescription and any medication you buy without a prescription (e.g., medicine for headaches, colds, or stomach upset).

Are you a healthy weight? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I'm not sure.

TIP

Being underweight or obese can lower your fertility and are linked to health problems in newborns.

Knowing your Body Mass Index (BMI) will tell you if you are a healthy weight.

Find out your BMI at www.dietitians.ca/your-health/assess-yourself/assess-your-bmi/bmi-adult.aspx

How often do you exercise? I exercise for _____ minutes most weeks.

TIP

Moderate to vigorous activity for a minimum of 150 minutes per week not only helps to maintain a healthy weight, it is also recommended for good overall health. Moderate to vigorous activity will make you sweat but you should still be able to talk while you exercise. Learn more at www.csep.ca/CMFiles/Guidelines/CSEP_PAGuidelines_adults_en.pdf

Do you eat healthy? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ I'm not sure.

TIP

Eating healthy can help you to maintain a healthy weight, prevent disease and improve health. Visit Canada's Food Guide to learn more about eating healthy foods at www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index-eng.php. If you can't afford to buy enough food or healthy foods, contact your local public health unit for programs and support.

Look under the Websites and Organizations section at the end of this booklet to find your local public health unit.

OTHER TIPS FOR PHYSICAL HEALTH:

- If you smoke or chew tobacco, get help to quit. Try to avoid second-hand smoke. Smoking tobacco and being around second-hand smoke can reduce your fertility and is harmful during pregnancy.
- Follow the Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines. There is no safe amount of alcohol, no safe type of alcohol and no safe time to drink alcohol when intending to get pregnant or during pregnancy. Alcohol during pregnancy can cause permanent brain damage in an unborn baby. www.ccsa.ca/Resource%20Library/2012-Canada-Low-Risk-Alcohol-Drinking-Guidelines-Brochure-en.pdf
- Be substance free (including marijuana, recreational/street drugs and prescription medications that aren't prescribed for you). If you have trouble stopping or cutting down on your use, help is available. Talk to your health care provider or visit www.connexontario.ca

My Sexual Health

Taking care of your sexual health can improve your overall health, protect your fertility and improve your chances of having a healthy baby.

I plan to prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs) by: _____

TIP

Practice safer sex (using male or female condoms, dental dams, etc.) to prevent STIs. You can have a sexually transmitted infection without even knowing it.

The date of my last screening for STIs was: _____

TIP

Get screened and treated for STIs, especially when you have a new partner. Ask your new partner(s) if they have been screened. Untreated sexually transmitted infections can cause fertility problems in people of all genders.

Everyone should have a plan to prevent sexually transmitted infections.

Healthy Sperm: Men don't always realize that their health is important for a healthy pregnancy. It takes about 3 months for new sperm to fully develop. Drinking alcohol, smoking tobacco, taking certain medications, exposure to industrial chemicals, too much stress, and being overweight can make it difficult to make healthy sperm.

»» **FACT**



My Mental Health

Your mental health is part of your overall health. Positive mental health supports your ability to reach your life goals.

People who make me feel good about myself when I'm with them include: _____

TIP

Build and keep relationships with positive people who make you feel good about yourself.

Things I like about my relationship include: _____

Things I would like to change about my relationship include: _____

TIP

If you are in a relationship, ask yourself if it is positive, trusting and respectful. If you don't feel safe or supported in your relationship, it could be abusive. Being hurt physically, sexually or emotionally is dangerous to your health and can be harmful to children.

Things that cause stress in my life include: _____

I manage my stress by: _____

TIP

Some stress in your life is normal. Use positive ways to manage the stress you do have. Talk to someone you trust if you feel like you have too much stress. Visit www.cmha.ca/mental_health/stress/ to learn more about stress.



I usually get _____ hours of sleep each night.

Things I can do to get a good night's sleep include: _____

TIP

Take care of your mental health by being physically active, eating healthy, and getting a good night's sleep (7-9 hours).

My Family Health History

Knowing your family health history is important to your health. Your family’s health history can impact your fertility and your children’s health. Knowing your family health history can help you take steps to reduce possible risks to your health and future children. If you know your family health history, share it with your health care provider.

My health problems: _____



Health problems in my family:

Health Problem	Who
Depression after baby was born	Sister
Cystic fibrosis	Cousin



Planning When to Have Children

If you want to have children or another child, you will also want to think about when is the right time. It's also important to know at what age conception (when sperm fertilizes an egg) is easiest and safest.

When should I start a family?

The ability to make a baby (fertility) gets lower as people get older. Older men have less healthy sperm and the sperm may not move as well. In their mid-30s, it gets harder and takes longer for women to get pregnant. Having a baby after age 35 can increase the chances of health problems for both the individual and the baby.

»»FACT

How long does it take to get pregnant?

Most people who are trying to get pregnant by having sex and who do not have fertility problems get pregnant within a year.

»»FACT

When should I ask for a referral to a fertility specialist?

If you are under 35 and you have not been able to get pregnant after trying for a year, ask your health care provider for a referral to a fertility specialist. If you have a medical condition that could cause fertility problems, talk to your health care provider sooner. If you are 35 years or older and have not been able to get pregnant after 6 months of trying, talk to your health care provider. Fertility treatments can help people to get pregnant, but they are less successful as people get older.

»»FACT

How long should I wait before having another baby?

It is best to wait at least 1.5 years (18 months) but no more than 5 years between the last birth and the next pregnancy. This gap gives an individual's body time to recover and gives a better chance for the next baby to be healthy.

»»FACT

My Next Steps

Based on the information and tips in this booklet, there are a lot of things you can do to meet your life and reproductive goals. Start by choosing one or two small goals and use the chart below to help you track your successes. Examples of small goals include:

- Visit a website to get more information.
- Make an appointment to see my health care provider.
- Check to see if I need to eat more vegetables and fruits each day.
- Fill out sections of this booklet.



What I will do	By when	Help I will need to do this	Celebrating each step towards success
Example: I will walk after dinner for 10-15 minutes on Monday and Thursday evenings.	Starting on Monday	I will ask my partner to encourage me and a friend to walk with me.	- Called my friend and booked our walk - Walked on Thursday - Walked 6 times this month!

Making a reproductive life plan and thinking about your next steps puts you on track to a healthier life!

Websites and Organizations

The websites and resources on this page will give you more information to help you meet your goals.

Find your local public health unit for help with healthy living, sexual health, birth control and referrals to local programs and services. Call 211 or www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/phu/locations.aspx

Abuse Assaulted Women's Helpline www.awhl.org 1-866-863-0511 or 1-866-863-7868 (TTY)

AIDS & Sexual Health Infoline: Toll free: 1-800-668-2437 Local: 416-392-2437

Adoption Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/adoption/index.aspx

Alcohol Low-Risk Drinking Guidelines www.ccsa.ca/Resource%20Library/2012-Canada-Low-Risk-Alcohol-Drinking-Guidelines-Brochure-en.pdf

Birth Control Information and education on sexual health www.sexualityandu.ca

Drugs Drug and Alcohol Helpline in Ontario www.drugandalcoholhelpline.ca 1-800-565-8603

Fertility www.healthycanadians.gc.ca/healthy-living-vie-saine/pregnancy-grossesse/fertility-fertilite/fert-eng.php

Folic Acid www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/hp-gs/guide/02_fa-af-eng.php

Health Before Pregnancy Information for women and men before pregnancy www.healthbeforepregnancy.ca

Health Care Providers Find a health care provider www.ontario.ca/page/find-family-doctor-or-nurse-practitioner

LGBTQ Information for lesbian, gay, bi, trans and queer people considering parenthood www.lgbtqpn.ca

Medications/Drugs/Chemicals Information about impact of exposure to alcohol, drugs, medications, toxins, chemicals during pregnancy & breastfeeding Motherisk www.motherisk.org 1-877-439-2744

Mental Health Canadian Mental Health Association www.cmha.ca/mental-health

Mental Health Mental Health Helpline www.mentalhealthhelpline.ca 1-866-531-2600

Nutrition Eat Right Ontario www.eatrightontario.ca 1-877-510-5102

Physical Activity Physical activity guidelines for adults www.participation.com

Smoking Smoker's Helpline www.smokershelpline.ca 1-877-513-5333

Smoking Quit Smoking www.mhp.gov.on.ca/en/smoke-free/quit-smoking.asp

STIs Information and education on sexual health www.sexualityandu.ca

Vaccines Immunization for adults www.health.gov.on.ca/en/public/programs/immunization/static/immunization_tool.html



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