

PRECONCEPTION HEALTH

The health of parents prior to conception establishes the foundation for their new child's health throughout his or her life. The goals for preconception care are to **improve the health status of women and men before conception** and to **reduce those behaviours and individual and environmental factors** that could contribute to poor maternal and child health outcomes.



Estimated that **50%** of pregnancies are **unplanned**



23% of women aged 20 to 34 **smoke**



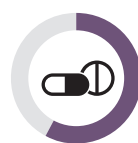
73% of women aged 15 years and older consume **alcohol**



8% of women aged 3 to 79 have **low serum ferritin** concentrations



16% of women aged 20 to 29 **smoke marijuana**



58% of women take folic acid prior to pregnancy

RECOMMENDATIONS

- > **150 minutes per week** of moderate to vigorous **physical activity** for **adults aged 64 and under**.
- > No more than **2 drinks per day** on most days, with no more than 10 drinks per week for **non-pregnant women** to reduce long term health risks.
- > All **women** who *could* become pregnant should take a daily **multivitamin** containing 400 mcg (0.4 mg) of **folic acid**.



Obesity rates have more than **DOUBLED** in the past 10 years; **16%** of women aged 25 to 34 years are **obese** and **22%** are **overweight**



FOLIC ACID

Folic acid **reduces the risk of neural tube defects**, including anencephaly and spina bifida. Evidence also suggests that supplementation with folic acid is associated with lower risk for other birth defects including cleft palate anomalies, cardiovascular and urinary anomalies, and some pediatric cancers.



HEALTHY BODY WEIGHT

Both low and high preconception Body Mass Index (BMI) can **negatively affect pregnancy** outcomes. The preconception period is the ideal time to achieve (or progress towards) an optimal weight.

IMMUNIZATIONS

Immunization prior to pregnancy can **prevent adverse pregnancy outcomes**, prevent infections from being transmitted to the fetus and provide protection during early infancy.

NUTRITION

Healthy eating is a **key component to overall health**, and the preconception period is an ideal time for women to improve their diet. Nutritional needs change in pregnancy, and a pre-existing pattern of healthy eating helps to optimize maternal and fetal health.

MENTAL HEALTH

Maternal depression and anxiety has **adverse effects** on outcomes such as premature birth, birth-weight, breastfeeding initiation, and cognitive and emotional development of infants and young children.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Exercise **contributes to overall health**, decreasing the risk of chronic conditions, important for weight reduction and maintenance, and has a positive effect on mental health and well-being.

SMOKING

Quitting smoking during the preconception period can **eliminate most of the negative impacts on future pregnancies**, in addition to providing health benefits for the woman.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

A person's environment includes their home, community, workplace, and other places where **exposure to potential chemical and physical hazards** may occur. The health impacts of preconception exposure to toxins are complex and difficult to verify.

For references consult **Chapter 2: Preconception Care** in: Public Health Agency of Canada. Family-Centred Maternity and Newborn Care: National Guidelines. Ottawa (ON): PHAC; 2017.

For more information about the **Family-Centred Maternity and Newborn Care: National Guidelines**, or to download this document, please search "maternity and newborn care" on **CANADA.CA**.

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