

Ontario prenatal education key messages to start all kids on the path to health

The Best Start Resource Centre launches comprehensive prenatal education key messages online resource at www.ontarioprenataleducation.ca

March 22, 2016 TORONTO – Preconception and prenatal health are the foundation for lifelong health. A growing body of evidence suggests that health and weight before and during pregnancy have a direct influence on the baby’s future health, including their risk for obesity and diabetes later in life.

With funding from the Government of Ontario, the Best Start Resource Centre, a key Health Nexus program, has developed an online resource for prenatal educators to assist them in providing women and their partners with consistent, evidence-based prenatal key messages on 25 topics covering the areas of health before conception, pregnancy, labour and birth, newborn and postpartum health.

“All parents want the best for their children, but there can be a lot of conflicting information out there” says Wendy McAllister, Manager of the Best Start Resource Centre. “By providing Ontario’s prenatal educators with evidence-based, clear and consistent key messages on a wide variety of topics – including healthy eating, alcohol consumption and smoking during pregnancy – we are helping pregnant women make informed decisions when it comes to their future child’s health and well-being.”

There are many ways to use the prenatal key messages available at ontarioprenataleducation.ca; also available in French at educationprenataleontario.ca. The online resource can be used as a quick reference for evidence-based information, or to prepare or update a prenatal education curriculum. The key messages for each topic can be shared with clients directly and supporting evidence, resources and links are also provided.

“Good health begins before you are born. That’s why the Ontario Government is committed to helping women and their partners who are thinking of conceiving or are already pregnant. The Best Start Resource Centre will provide expert advice to Ontario’s prenatal educators to help those who are planning to start a family.”

— **Dipika Damerla, Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Responsible for Long-Term Care and Wellness)**

According to Public Health Ontario’s report *Addressing Obesity in Children and Youth*, specific preconception and prenatal factors have been associated with childhood obesity, including maternal smoking, maternal gestational diabetes and maternal weight. If current trends in childhood obesity persist, by 2040 up to 70% of today’s children will be overweight or obese adults, placing them at increased risk for heart disease, cancer, strokes, psychosocial problems and type 2 diabetes.

The prenatal education key messages are part of Ontario's Healthy Kids Strategy to improve children's health and well-being. Health promotion interventions during the preconception, prenatal and early infancy life stages have the potential for long-term impacts on health and weight.

About Health Nexus

[Health Nexus](#) is a leader in health promotion, a bilingual organization that supports individuals, organizations and communities to strengthen their capacity to promote health. Their broad approach to health includes health equity, chronic disease prevention and early child development. Over the last 30 years, they have been supporting health services workers and health promotion organizations to develop and implement strategies to improve the health of their communities. Their services include consultations, training events and resource development.

About the Best Start Resource Centre

The [Best Start Resource Centre](#) supports service providers across Ontario working to implement preconception, prenatal and child health promotion programs and initiatives. In addition to a wide range of resources on maternal child health, some of them available in multiple languages, Best Start provides training, consultation, and networking opportunities for service providers. The Resource Centre also develops awareness campaigns to enhance the health of expectant and new parents, newborns and young children.

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