

# Prenatal Education

## Key Messages for Ontario



## Transition to Parenthood

### Key Messages

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#### The birth of a baby brings joy and challenges to the lives of parents.

You may have many different emotions after your baby is born. You may feel joy, wonder, and happiness as well as feel overwhelmed, worried, or tired at different times. These are all normal feelings after the birth of a baby. Caring for a baby is often demanding and can leave little time for rest and other things.

A new baby means many changes for parents. It can take several months to get comfortable with your new role as a parent.

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#### You can prepare for parenting during pregnancy.

There are things you can do during pregnancy to help you prepare for parenting, which include learning about:

- ▶ Being a parent.
- ▶ What supplies you will need for the new baby.
- ▶ Breastfeeding.
- ▶ Healthy growth and development of a newborn.
- ▶ Immunizations needed for a baby in the first year of life.
- ▶ Pregnancy/parental leave and benefits.
- ▶ If you have a partner, you can both prepare for parenting by talking about:
  - ▶ How you feel about becoming a parent.
  - ▶ How you will share daily tasks.
  - ▶ How to get enough sleep after the baby arrives.
  - ▶ How you want to raise your child.

A maternity or parental leave allows you or your partner to be at home with your baby for a period of time after the birth of your baby. This is a very important time for you to be together. You can about learn about maternity and parenting leaves and benefits by:

- ▶ Talking to your employer.
- ▶ Exploring your options if you, or your partner, are self-employed.
- ▶ Contacting Service Canada Employment Insurance Information Service, at 1-800-206-7218.
- ▶ Visiting [www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/es/pubs/guide/pregnancy.php](http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/es/pubs/guide/pregnancy.php).

To learn about your rights during pregnancy and while breastfeeding visit the Ontario Human Rights Commission at [www.ohrc.on.ca/en/pregnancy-and-breastfeeding-brochure](http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/pregnancy-and-breastfeeding-brochure).

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### **Build a support network before your baby is born.**

By planning ahead, it will be easier for you to access support after the baby is born. Ask family and friends to help out with things such as meal preparation and housework when you need it. You can find out about parenting groups and other supports in your community by contacting your local:

- ▶ Service Ontario: 1-866-532-3161.
- ▶ Ontario Early Years Centres: 1-866-821-7770.

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### **If you have a partner, your relationship may change after your baby is born. This may be especially true if this is your first baby when you move from being a couple to becoming a family.**

Caring for a newborn takes a lot of time and effort. Sometimes parents have difficulty finding time for each other.

During your pregnancy, talk to your partner about:

- ▶ The changes the birth of your baby will bring.
- ▶ How you will support each other in caring for your baby.
- ▶ How you will nurture your relationship once your baby is born.
- ▶ When you might feel comfortable having sex after the birth.
- ▶ How you will support each other to keep up your own interests.
- ▶ How to recognize signs of physical or mental health concerns, such as postpartum depression.

If you have trouble resolving conflict, you can get help to learn to communicate better.

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## **The emotional connection you develop with your baby can help you adjust to your new role as a parent.**

During pregnancy, you begin to develop an emotional connection to your baby. It is fostered as you talk to your unborn baby and touch your belly. After the birth, this connection can be strengthened as you:

- ▶ Hold your new baby skin-to-skin.
- ▶ Play with and talk to your baby.
- ▶ Respond to your baby's needs.

The pleasure of holding and playing with your baby will help you feel capable in your role as a parent. Your baby will benefit from this too. It helps your baby's brain develop. Fathers, partners, and other support people can also develop this emotional connection with the new baby.

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## **Take time to take care of yourself so that you are best able to take care of your baby.**

Being a parent can be very demanding physically and emotionally. It is important to take care of your own needs as well as your newborn's needs. You will feel better if you:

- ▶ Eat regular, healthy meals.
- ▶ Get enough sleep.
- ▶ Accept that sometimes not all your tasks will get done.
- ▶ Share your child's care with your partner and/or other support people.
- ▶ Engage in physical activity.
- ▶ Engage in social activities or personal hobbies that you enjoy.

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## **Ask for help and support in the early months after your baby is born.**

It is normal to have questions and concerns about transitioning to parenthood. The support of your family or of someone who has experience with children can be very helpful. You can find out more about being a new parent from the following resources.

- ▶ Your local public health unit 1-866-532-3161
- ▶ EarlyON - Ontario's Child and Family Centres 1-866-821-7770  
[www.ontario.ca/EarlyYears](http://www.ontario.ca/EarlyYears)
- ▶ Parents Matter  
[www.parentsmatter.ca](http://www.parentsmatter.ca)
- ▶ oMama  
[www.omama.com](http://www.omama.com)