



## “Want To Become A Dad?”

### Men’s health before pregnancy

It takes three months for sperm to develop. During this time, hazards such as smoke, heat, radiation, chemicals and substance abuse can damage sperm or cause a low sperm count that can lead to infertility or possible health issues in the baby.

### There are healthy lifestyle choices that can help make healthy sperm.

**Diet:** A healthy, balanced diet is important. Eat according to Canada’s Food Guide. A healthy body equals healthy sperm.

**Infections:** Chlamydia, gonorrhoea and genital warts have been associated with male infertility. Infections can cause scarring that prevents the sperm’s passage. See your health care professional if you have any concerns.

**Temperature:** The scrotum needs to be kept four degrees lower than body temperature. High temperatures can affect sperm quality by lowering sperm counts. Avoid tight pants, hot tubs, use of computers on your lap, heated working environments and saunas.

**Alcohol:** Avoid alcohol while trying to conceive a baby, as alcohol can damage sperm.

**Drugs:** There are a number of drugs that affect fertility. These drugs include steroids, cytotoxic drugs and opiates. Marijuana and cocaine lessens seminal fluid and lowers the sperm count.



**Smoking:** Smoking affects the movement of sperm. See your health care professional for an appropriate cessation program.

**Environmental Toxins:** Substances thought to have a detrimental effect on sperm are radiation, pesticides, organic mercury and estrogens in water supplies. These toxins can cause birth defects and can lessen sperm count.

**Radiation and X-ray exposure:** Exposure to radiation can impair sperm production. It can take several years for sperm production to return to normal. With high doses of radiation, sperm production can be permanently impaired.

**Unhealthy weights:** Studies have found an association between an unhealthy, heavy

weight in men and infertility. See your health care professional if you have any concerns about your weight.

**Stress:** Chronic or extreme stress may have a negative impact on hormones related to male reproduction.

When planning on conceiving a child, speak with your health care provider to assist in a healthier lifestyle. It may take you and your partner a while to get pregnant, so it's important to start now in developing a healthier lifestyle together.

References: [www.beststart.org](http://www.beststart.org), [www.menhealth.com](http://www.menhealth.com).

Pre-conception Health for Men, American Pregnancy Association, 2012.

[www.americanpregnancy.org](http://www.americanpregnancy.org)

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