

# **Breastfeeding, Healthy Eating and Active Living: Natural Tools for Diabetes Prevention**

## **Canadian Diabetes Strategy Prevention and Promotion Contribution Program**

### **Sponsoring Partner**

#### **Breastfeeding Committee for Canada**

### **Project Summary**

The project goal is to prevent childhood and adult obesity, which is linked to type 2 diabetes by creating an enabling environment for “at risk” childbearing women to change their health behaviors and to facilitate them breastfeeding their infants to provide the protective effects of breastmilk to their infants from birth. Women “at risk” include: those living in poverty, in social isolation, with poor access to services or otherwise facing social or economic conditions that often go beyond individual control and lead to poorer health; those most likely to have unhealthy babies due to poor health and nutrition that may be associated with alcohol or drug abuse or those living with violence; and those who develop gestational diabetes as well as Aboriginals and immigrant and/or refugee women. Many of these characteristics can increase the predisposition of these women and their children to type 2 diabetes and decrease the likelihood that they will initiate or sustain breastfeeding. The childbearing period is an optimum time for women to make lifestyle changes as a primary prevention intervention that can have long-term effects for themselves and their infants, children and other family members.

Program development, implementation and evaluation of a healthy lifestyle program specific for meeting the needs of “at risk” women will include capacity building at a community level. Key stakeholders working with childbearing women, women who will participate in the program and representatives of the Canadian Diabetes Association (CDA) will meet to plan the content, structure, implementation, and evaluation of the program. The women’s lifestyle program will be enhanced with increased breastfeeding support from health professionals working with childbearing women in the community through an in-service education workshop. Key stakeholders, including the childbearing women will participate in planning the workshop. Although the women’s lifestyle program and the workshop will be planned to meet the specific needs of the participants, principles of two programs that have been shown to be effective in promoting healthy lifestyle behaviors and facilitating breastfeeding will be used. These are principles of the Vitality Approach, developed by Health Canada and the Baby-

Friendly Initiative (BFI), an international program developed by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations' Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Two Canadian communities from different geographic regions will be selected to develop and implement programs in the communities and two similar sites will be selected for evaluation. Partners of the BCC will assist to identify and select communities: the Canada Nutrition and Prenatal Program (CPNP), provincial and territorial BFI committees and CDA. Populations reached through this partnership network include all levels of government, health professionals, "at risk" childbearing women and agencies and organizations working towards diabetes prevention and management in Canada. These connections ensure wide advertisement of the project to communities and knowledge and expertise in selecting appropriate communities.

The effect of the programs, both for the women and the health professionals, will be evaluated by comparing outcomes with two similar communities in which the program was not introduced. The overall evaluation of the community programs will contribute to determining models for developing community healthy lifestyle programs that promote and support breastfeeding for childbearing women. Dissemination and implementation of similar programs in Canadian communities will contribute to healthier living for families, protect the health of infants and children and promote healthy life activities at an early stage in life, which are all factors important for decreasing obesity and ultimately type 2 diabetes among Canadians.