

Your Choices Matter:

How Your Health Today Impacts Your Health Tomorrow

Facilitator's Guide



saskatchewan
preventioninstitute
our goal is **healthy** children

The information for this manual is based on the Saskatchewan Prevention Institute's (2009) report ***Infant Mortality in Saskatchewan: Evidence to Inform Public Health Practices***, as well as updated information where necessary. To access this report, which contains additional information on infant mortality in Saskatchewan and modifiable risk factors, please visit: <http://bit.ly/SKInfantMortality>. The report also contains a reference list for further reading.

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*To access detailed plans for each of these lessons, please visit: <http://bit.ly/Your-Choices-Matter-Resources>.

Saskatchewan Prevention Institute

The Saskatchewan Prevention Institute is a non-profit organization, founded in 1980. Our mandate is to reduce the occurrence of disabling conditions in children. We raise awareness by using primary prevention methods. We provide training, information, and resources, all of which are based on current best-evidence. We believe that children of all abilities have the right to the best physical, social, and emotional health possible.

The Saskatchewan Prevention Institute has long-term committed support from:

- Community-at-Large
- Government of Saskatchewan
- Kinsmen Telemiracle Foundation
- SaskAbilities
- University of Saskatchewan

The Saskatchewan Prevention Institute is guided by a Board of Directors, an Executive Committee, a Medical Advisory Committee, and a Program Advisory Committee.

What is Primary Prevention?

Primary prevention efforts aim to prevent disabling conditions from occurring by eliminating or changing risk factors that can occur before pregnancy, during pregnancy, or after birth. In this series of lessons, primary prevention refers to modifying risk factors that can occur before pregnancy.

Primary prevention is the responsibility of both society and individuals. Examples of primary prevention include the following:

- Testing for and treating sexually transmitted infections (STIs) before and during pregnancy to help prevent transmission of STIs to the fetus.
- Immunizing to prevent diseases like polio, measles, and whooping cough.
- Changing drinking habits to support pregnant friends to avoid alcohol to prevent Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).

Your Choices Matter

What is the *Your Choices Matter* Video and Facilitator's Guide?

Your Choices Matter is a tool for primary prevention. The video is focused on raising awareness about the impacts of youths' choices on their health, their future health, and the health of their potential future children. This includes decisions about drug and alcohol use, diet and exercise, relationships, vaccinations and regular health care, and sexual activity. To access the video, please visit <http://bit.ly/Your-Choices-Matter-Video>.

Saskatchewan youth were involved in the creation of this video through the Saskatchewan Prevention Institute's Infant Mortality Youth Advisory Committee. The goal is to improve the preconception health of young people and decrease the incidence of infant mortality in Saskatchewan.

The video and facilitator's guide can be used to engage youth and communities in conversations about the choices they can make today to ensure the best health outcomes for themselves and their future children. The guide provides background information and several lesson plans designed to address the various topics introduced in the video. The video itself is meant to introduce the topic and begin discussions; the lesson plans are a way to take these conversations a step further.



Preconception Health

Preconception health refers to the physical, mental, and emotional well-being of both men and women of childbearing age (ages 14-44) prior to becoming pregnant. This includes planned or unplanned pregnancy.

Why is preconception health important for males when only women can become pregnant?

Typically, when discussing preconception health, the focus is centred on the female. She carries the baby and her actions directly impact the health of the baby. Of course, in order to become pregnant, a male is also involved.

The effects of a male's health on the health of an unborn child are not as well understood as the effects of the female's health; however, it is known that the male's health is important. There are several ways that a male partner's health can impact the outcomes for the infant. For example, untreated sexually transmitted infections (STIs), smoking, alcohol use, and violence can impact the baby's health and the health of the mother.



Youth and Preconception Health

Why should youth care about preconception health?

There are several reasons why young people should care about preconception health.

1. There are several ways that the behaviours and decisions of youth today can impact their future health. Examples are, being involved in unhealthy relationships or smoking.
2. Small steps can be taken today by young people to improve their health.
3. The health of future children is impacted by the behaviours of their parents years before the pregnancy occurs. This includes improving the chances of babies living past their first year of life.
4. Almost half of pregnancies in North America are unintended (unplanned). Most adolescent pregnancies are unplanned, which makes it even more important for young people to be healthy.



Infant Mortality

Infant mortality refers to the death of an infant within the first year of life. Infant mortality is measured as the infant mortality rate (IMR), which is the number of deaths for infants less than one year of age per 1,000 live births in a given population.

Infant mortality rates are used internationally to determine the overall health of given populations; therefore, infant mortality is referred to as a universal health indicator. Although not all cases of infant deaths are preventable (e.g., severe congenital abnormalities), examining infant mortality rates in a given population can help to determine if there are behavioural, social, or environmental factors that are affecting the health of a population. Interventions can then be tailored to the specific needs of a community.



Why is it important to know about infant mortality?

Saskatchewan has one of the highest infant mortality rates in Canada.

Some risk factors for infant mortality, such as housing conditions and education, cannot always be changed by individuals. Instead, addressing these issues will take collaborative, community strategies, and also advocacy and collaboration with local, provincial, and federal governments.

Compared to risk factors like housing and education, behavioural risk factors, for the most part, can be changed when systemic barriers to making healthier choices are not significant (e.g., cost, accessibility, stigma). Unintended (unplanned) pregnancy, for example, is a risk factor for infant mortality that is highly modifiable by the couple when access to contraceptives, reproductive care, and education are available. Such access allows individuals to avoid unintended pregnancies, while also being better able to plan the pregnancies they do want.



By making positive, healthy choices before pregnancy, the risk of future complications and adverse health outcomes may be reduced.

Risk Factors for Infant Mortality

The following pages outline modifiable risk factors for infant mortality. Keep in mind that each person may have different barriers impacting their ability to make choices that would modify these risk factors. The information is from Saskatchewan Prevention Institute's (2009) report *Infant Mortality in Saskatchewan: Evidence to Inform Public Health Practices*. For more information about infant mortality in Saskatchewan or any of the following modifiable risk factors, please go to <http://bit.ly/SKInfantMortalityReport>. The report also contains a reference list for further reading.

Adolescent Pregnancy: Adolescent mothers are more likely to deliver low birth weight babies, have preterm births, and have lower rates of prenatal care than mothers in older age groups. These factors increase the risk of adverse health outcomes for the baby, including infant death and poorer health throughout childhood.

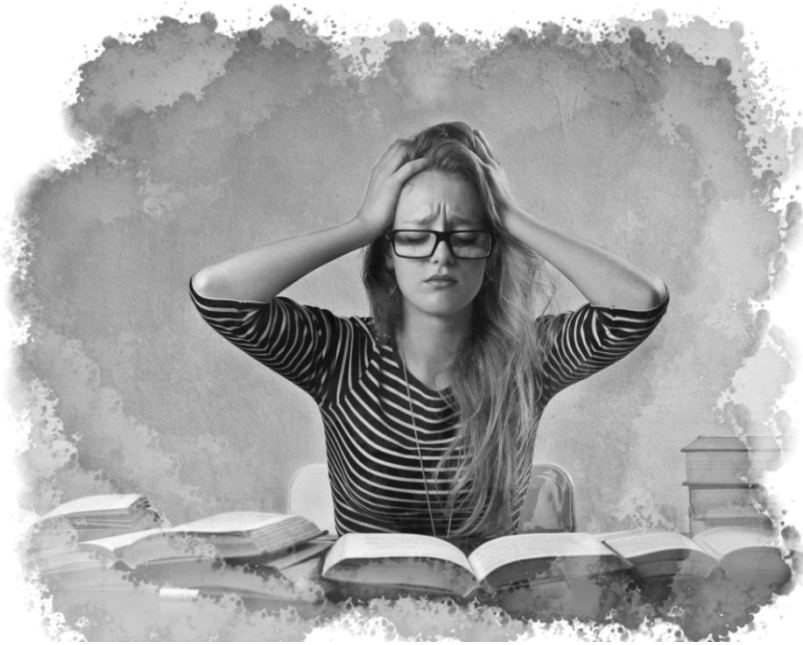
Alcohol Use: Alcohol is the most frequently used drug in Saskatchewan by men and women. It is also a teratogen, which means it can cause birth defects. Alcohol interferes with the typical development of the fetus's growing cells. Alcohol use at any time during pregnancy can cause lifelong impacts on the brain and body, called Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD). For more information about alcohol and FASD, please visit: <https://skprevention.ca/alcohol/>. The drinking behaviours of partners, family, and friends can influence prenatal alcohol use and the healthy development of babies.



Chronic Health Conditions: Diabetes, circulatory diseases, and respiratory diseases are three conditions that can impact infant mortality. Having a planned pregnancy, access to reliable birth control, and having chronic diseases closely monitored and controlled can decrease the risk to the pregnancy and infant.

Environmental Pollutants: Tobacco smoke, pesticides, and other environmental toxins have been shown to increase the risk of low birth weight and preterm births.

Health Care: Regular checkups by a physician before pregnancy and regular prenatal care during pregnancy, including testing for STIs, can help ensure that both parents are healthy and the baby will be provided with the best conditions in which to grow.



High Levels of Stress: Chronic stress may be an important determinant of preterm birth as it leads to reduced immune functioning and increases susceptibility to infections. Stress can have both direct and indirect effects on birth outcomes by impacting a mother's emotional and physical health.

Illicit Drug Use: Babies born to mothers who use substances are at risk of being born addicted to the same drugs. The babies may need additional medical support early in the postnatal period to wean them off these drugs. Illicit substance use can also result in miscarriage and negatively impact the development of a growing fetus.

Mental Health: The mental health of the mother has been found to impact the health of her baby. Depression and other psychological issues during pregnancy have been associated with slow fetal growth, delivering a preterm or low birth weight infant, and an increased risk of post-partum depression. These are predisposing factors to infant mortality. Accessing social support, mental health care, and prescribed medication for anxiety and depression can reduce the impact of harms associated with poor mental health during pregnancy.



Oral Health: There is evidence for a link between maternal periodontal (oral) disease and risk of preterm birth and low birth weight. While the evidence is mixed, it generally points to an association between oral health and risks related to infant mortality.



Smoking/Tobacco Use: Maternal smoking is the principle cause of low birth weight and has been associated with preterm births, sudden infant death syndrome, and respiratory distress syndrome. Smoking and exposure to second-hand smoke can impact the growing fetus. Following birth, babies who are exposed to second-hand and third-hand smoke experience more sickness than those living in smoke-free homes.

Social Support: Social support is associated with less maternal stress, anxiety, and depression. Having a support system can help reduce the physical and emotional impacts that come with being a new mother. Babies born to mothers with social support in the early part of pregnancy have higher average birth weights than babies born to mothers with low social support.

STIs: Sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis can impact the health of the fetus and newborn. Untreated STIs can cause complications such as miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy, pre-term birth, low birth weight, blindness and deafness, stillbirth, and newborn death. Testing for STIs and treating infections before delivery can reduce or eliminate the impact of an STI on a fetus or newborn.



Unhealthy Relationships: Unhealthy relationships are associated with depression, unplanned pregnancies, STIs, and dating violence. Violence during pregnancy is associated with inadequate or delayed prenatal care, postpartum depression, poor nutrition, and the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs as coping mechanisms. Violence can also result in injury to mother and fetus, preterm birth, miscarriage, and infant death. Please see the following fact sheet for more information: <https://skprevention.ca/resource-catalogue/domestic-violence/domestic-violence-and-pregnancy/>.

Unhealthy Weights: Research has shown that mothers who are underweight, overweight, or obese are at a higher risk for preterm birth, low birth weight babies, and early neonatal death (i.e., death of a live-born baby within the first seven days of life). Additionally, being underweight can impact a woman's fertility, and may lead to increased risk of maternal and fetal morbidity. Those who are overweight are at an increased risk of complications such as gestational diabetes and hypertension.

Unintended (Unplanned)

Pregnancy: Unintended

pregnancies are at higher risk of resulting in preterm or low birth weight newborns. Women who experience unintended pregnancies may be exposed to environmental risk factors before they know they are pregnant, or might maintain unhealthy behaviours (e.g., using alcohol or tobacco, poor nutrition) during the initial fetal development period. Improving health prior to pregnancy is an important way to reduce the chance of negative health impacts for fetuses and newborns.



Vaccinations: Many diseases that can be prevented by vaccination can cause damage to the fetus and/or can be passed on to the baby at birth. For example, if a mother has Rubella (German measles) during pregnancy, this can be passed on to the baby at birth and is associated with an increased risk of miscarriage within the first three months of pregnancy.

Vitamin and Mineral Intake: Taking 0.4 mg of folic acid supplement before and during pregnancy can decrease the risk of having a baby with a neural tube defect (e.g., spina bifida) by 50% in most women. It is recommended that all women of childbearing age take folic acid supplements, even if they are not planning a pregnancy, as neural tube defects can occur before a woman even knows that she is pregnant. In addition, adequate intake of vitamins and nutrients is important for personal health and the health of an unborn child.



Youth and Health Conversations

How can you begin health conversations with youth?

It can be difficult to encourage young people to think about their current health, let alone their health in the future and the health of their potential children. However, all of the factors listed on the previous pages have an impact on the personal health of youth today as well as their future health. It is important that youth are provided with accurate information about these modifiable risk factors (e.g., alcohol use, unprotected sex, STIs, unhealthy eating, and unhealthy relationships). With accurate information, they will be better able to make healthy decisions.

This manual has been arranged so that you can use the suggested questions in the lesson plans to begin discussion after viewing the video. Additional questions may include:

- What are some of the risk factors that were shown in this clip?
- Have you experienced or seen any of these risk factors among your peers?
- What are some of your dreams for the future? How might decisions you make today impact these dreams?
- What are some steps that you can take to help improve your health today?
- How can you talk with your peers about the importance of caring for their health today?
- Who can you share this video clip with? Why would you want to do this?

Bringing the Discussion to the Classroom

How can you approach the risk factors discussed in this guide in the classroom?

The suggested lessons in this manual address common risk factors and can help guide discussions about the impact of these risk factors for youth today, in the future, and for their future children. Detailed lesson plans are available at <http://bit.ly/Your-Choices-Matter-Resources>. There are several activities for each suggested lesson in the detailed lesson plans. Curriculum links are also provided for each activity.

Connections to the Saskatchewan Education Curriculum

	Lessons	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Grade 8: Health Education								
USC8.1 Analyze and establish effective strategies of support for the purposes of helping others increase health-enhancing behaviours.				★				
USC8.3 Investigate and analyze the impact of in/formal supports and services (including testing and diagnostic services) available to individuals, families, and communities infected with/affected by non-curable infections (including HIV and Hepatitis C).	★							
USC8.4 Demonstrate an understanding of the impact of violence (including but not limited to emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, spiritual abuse, and neglect) on the well-being of, and the supports needed for self, family, and community.								★
USC8.7 Assess the social, cultural, and environmental influences on and support for sexual health knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, and decisions.	★	★						
DM8.8 Appraise the role of “support” in making healthy decisions related to family roles and responsibility, non-curable infections/diseases, violence and abuse, body image, sustainability, and sexual health.	★		★	★				★
AP8.10 Design, implement, and evaluate three seven-day action plans that establish multiple supports for responsible health actions related to family roles and responsibilities, non-curable infections/diseases, violence and abuse, body image, sustainability, and sexual health.			★	★				
Grade 8: English Language Arts								
CC8.6 Use oral language to interact purposefully, confidently, and respectfully in a variety of situations, including one-to-one, small groups, and large group discussions (expressing feelings and viewpoints and contributing to group harmony).	★							
Grade 9: Health Education								
USC9.1 Develop informed conclusions about the importance of leadership skills and health promotion in healthy decision making.			★					
USC9.4 Analyze the norms and cultural expectations (e.g., community, cultural) associated with romantic relationships as a means to effectively plan for related health promotion.	★							★
USC9.6 Analyze the health, economic, and social supports and challenges of addictions (e.g., tobacco, shopping, alcohol, gambling, Internet, drugs) on self, family, community, and the environment.			★					
USC9.9 Develop and demonstrate personal insight, motivation, and skills necessary to enhance and promote sexual health and avoid health-compromising sexual attitudes and behaviours.	★							
DM9.11 Analyze the health opportunities and challenges and establish personal health promotion goal statements related to comprehensive approaches to safety, non-curable infections/diseases, romantic relationships, addictions, tragic death and suicide, chronic illness, and sexual health.							★	
Grade 9: English Language Arts								
CR9.7a and CR9.7b Read independently and demonstrate comprehension of a variety of information texts, including expository essays, historical accounts, news articles, and scientific writing.				★	★			

	Lessons	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Grade 9: English Language Arts								
CC9.5a Create and present a variety of visual and multimedia presentations to best represent a message for an intended audience and purpose.				★	★	★		
CC9.6a and CC9.6b Use oral language to interact purposefully, confidently, and appropriately in a variety of situations, including participating in one-to-one, small group, and large group discussions (e.g., prompting and supporting others, solving problems, resolving conflicts, building consensus, articulation and explaining personal viewpoint, discussing preferences, speaking to extend current knowledge, and celebrating special events and accomplishments).	★	★				★		
Grade 9: Science								
RE9.4 Analyze the process of human reproduction, including the influence of reproductive and contraceptive technologies.	★							
Level 10: Wellness								
W6 Model and promote a local culture/norm of safety and injury prevention (i.e., physical safety, social safety, psychological safety, spiritual safety, environmental safety) to optimize well-being of self, family, community, and the environment.		★						
W7 Promote sustainable well-being by planning for and engaging in movement activities, alone and with others, that enhance the health-related (i.e., cardiovascular endurance, flexibility, muscular endurance, muscular strength, and body composition) and skill-related (i.e., power, agility, speed, reaction time, balance, and co-ordination) components of fitness.					★			
W8 Assess how relationships (e.g., self, peers, family, teachers, teammates, opponents, coaches, and employers) influence all dimensions of wellness.			★	★		★		★
W11 Make informed decisions regarding personal healthy eating practices based on connections to wellness.					★		★	
Level 10: English Language Arts								
CCB10.2b Create and present a visual or multimedia presentation supporting a prepared talk on a research issue, using either digital or other presentation tools.						★		
Level 20: Health Sciences								
HS20-HC2 Examine how personal, cultural, and societal beliefs impact ethical decisions regarding health care.						★		
HS20-HB1 Analyze the anatomy and biology of human health.				★		★		
HS20-NU2 Analyze dietary choices based on personal and cultural beliefs and scientific understanding of nutrition.					★			
Level 20: Communication Studies								
Recognize the importance of effective communication in a variety of situations. Recognize that communication involves problem solving and decision making.	★	★						
Level 20: Media Studies								
Recognize the way in which various mass media shape their messages, and construct a sense of what the world is or how it works.		★						★
Level 20: Environmental Science								
ES20-A31 Assess the impact of human activities on indoor and outdoor air quality and the need for regulations and mitigating technology to minimize risks to human health.		★						
Level 30: Psychology								
To understand how the thoughts, feelings, and behaviours of people are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others.	★					★		

LESSON* 1:

Healthy Sexual Decision Making, Adolescent Pregnancy, and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)



Rationale

Approximately half of all pregnancies in North America are unintended (unplanned). Saskatchewan has one of the highest rates of adolescent pregnancy in the country and some of the highest rates of sexually transmitted infection (STIs), including HIV, chlamydia, and gonorrhea. During adolescence, youth become more aware of their bodies, sexual feelings, and desire to be involved in romantic relationships. However, youth need adequate information and support to make informed decisions. Even with this information, youth may not be able to make healthy decisions at all times; therefore, repetition and continued support is needed.



Key Understandings

- Students are able to discuss different options that they have in a variety of sexual situations.
- Students are aware of the risks of unprotected sexual contact, including STIs and unintended pregnancy.
- Students understand different forms of birth control, including how and where to access them.



Essential Questions

- Why is it important to understand the risks of unprotected sexual activity?
- What are STIs and how can they impact your life now and in the future?
- How would your life change if you or your partner became pregnant?
- Where can you go to access testing for STIs and pregnancy?
- Where can you go to access birth control?

*To access detailed plans for lessons 1-7, please visit: <http://bit.ly/Your-Choices-Matter-Resources>.

LESSON 2: Alcohol, Drugs, and Tobacco Use



Rationale

During adolescence, youth often experiment with alcohol, drugs, and tobacco. Even though there are large public campaigns about the dangers of tobacco and drugs, alcohol is used widely in our society. It is important to have conversations about the impact that alcohol, drugs, and tobacco have on our communities, our families, and ourselves. Substance use is closely connected with impulsive behaviours, unprotected sexual activity, unplanned pregnancies, and sexual assault.



Key Understandings

- Students are able to discuss the impact of substance use in their communities.
- Students are aware of the risks of substance use and its connections with sexual behaviour.



Essential Questions

- Why is it important to understand the risks of substance use?
- How is substance use connected with risky sexual behaviour?
- How has substance use impacted you, your family, and your communities?
- How can you make healthier choices about substance use?

LESSON 3: Coping with Stress



Rationale

Stress refers to an individual's emotional and physical response to situations that are new, dangerous, or a threat to oneself. Stress is an everyday occurrence. Learning to cope with stress is important and ongoing. Experiencing stress activates the flight, fight, or freeze response. Coping with stress positively leads to better overall health.



Key Understandings

- Students are able to discuss stressful daily events.
- Students learn ways to cope with stress from one another.
- Students are aware of support services available to them to help them cope with stress.
- Students will begin to develop a support system.



Essential Questions

- How do individuals experience stress on a daily basis?
- Why is it important to learn how to cope with stress?
- What are some ways that people cope with stress?
- Why is it important to develop support systems?

LESSON 4: Nutrition and Exercise



Rationale

In today's world, the emphasis on nutrition and exercise focuses on Body Mass Index (BMI) and obesity. While BMI and obesity are important health measures, they can create an obsession with body size that impacts self-image, lead to disordered eating and/or obsessive exercise, and decrease motivation to be healthier. Increasing youths' awareness of the purpose and value of nutrients is important, as is promoting an understanding that behaviours reflect health, and not necessarily weight alone. It is also important to challenge misconceptions regarding exercise so that students who are not involved in sports can understand that there are a variety of healthy exercise options available to them.



Key Understandings

- Students will understand the concept of energy in – energy out.
- Students will explore the role of micronutrients to health.
- Students will expand their understanding of exercise.



Essential Questions

- Why is it important to balance the energy that you are taking in from food with the energy you are using daily for different activities?
- What are some ways, through diet, to increase micronutrients to meet daily recommended levels?
- What are some of the ways to increase exercise levels through daily activities?

LESSON 5: Health Care



Rationale

Many young people in Saskatchewan do not have a family doctor, and even if they do, they do not see the doctor regularly. In some communities, doctors are not available at all. Regular, yearly physicals are important not only to ensure physical health, but also to give youth an opportunity to meet with their healthcare professional. This allows students to form a relationship in which they feel comfortable asking any questions that they may have. It also gives an opportunity to ensure that vaccinations are up-to-date and for follow-up with youth who may have chronic illnesses.



Key Understandings

- To understand the importance of and the role of vaccinations in population health.
- To explore the role that regular health care can play in personal health plans.
- To develop an understanding of the importance of monitoring and controlling chronic diseases, and supporting peers who may be experiencing these diseases.



Essential Questions

- Why do they call immunization “herd protection”? Why is there a debate about whether it is good?
- How does health care today impact not just immediate personal health but also personal health in the future?
- What are the challenges of living with a chronic illness and maintaining health?

LESSON 6: Oral Health



Rationale

Despite the fact that oral health education receives very little attention, it can positively or negatively impact an individual's overall health. Oral health is one of the most common preventable and transmittable chronic health concerns for young people. For the most part, both dental caries (tooth decay) and periodontal disease (gum disease) are preventable.



Key Understandings

- Students will develop an understanding of the cause of both dental caries and periodontal disease.
- Students will become aware of the risks of transmitting dental caries.
- Students will explore the impact of nutrition on oral health.
- Students will discuss the link between oral health care and chronic diseases.



Essential Questions

- Why is oral health care important?
- What are dental caries and how can they be spread?
- How does nutrition impact oral health?

LESSON 7: Healthy Relationships



Rationale

In order for students to develop a support system and healthy romantic relationships, they first have to examine the characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships. For all ages, this can begin by looking at their relationships with friends and supportive adults. Students can also apply this to their romantic relationships.



Key Understandings

- Students can identify healthy and unhealthy relationship behaviours.
- Students have an understanding of the importance of a healthy support system.
- Students have an understanding of the importance of healthy relationships.
- Students can identify places in their community where they can get support regarding unhealthy relationships.
- Students understand the link between unhealthy relationships and sexual violence as well as the increased risk of violence during pregnancy.



Essential Questions

- Why is it important to understand the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships?
- What are the signs of an unhealthy relationship, either with a friend or a romantic partner?
- How can being in an unhealthy relationship affect your health now and in the future?
- Where can you go for help if you are in an unhealthy relationship?

