



wellness

**PREGNANCY,
CHILDBIRTH,
& PARENTING**

Robert E. Kime

PREGNANCY, CHILDBIRTH, & PARENTING

Robert E. Kime

WELLNESS



A MODERN
LIFE-STYLE
LIBRARY

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To Shari and Greg, Eric and Joseph

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The procedures and explanations given in this publication are based on research and consultation with medical and nursing authorities. To the best of our knowledge, these procedures and explanations reflect currently accepted medical practice; nevertheless, they cannot be considered absolute and universal recommendations. For individual application, treatment suggestions must be considered in light of the individual's health, subject to a doctor's specific recommendations. The authors and the publisher disclaim responsibility for any adverse effects resulting directly or indirectly from the suggested procedures, from any undetected errors, or from the reader's misunderstanding of the text.

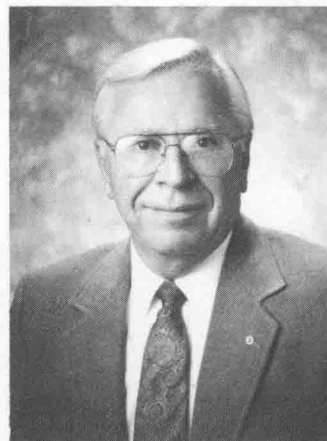
PREGNANCY, CHILDBIRTH, & PARENTING

This new series is designed to meet the growing demand for current, accessible information about the increasingly popular wellness approach to personal health. The result of a collaborative effort by a highly professional writing, editorial, and publishing team, the *Wellness* series consists of 16 volumes, each on a single topic. Each volume in this attractively produced series combines original material with carefully selected readings, relevant statistical data, and illustrations. The series objectives are to increase awareness of the value of a wellness approach to personal health and to help the reader become a more informed consumer of health-related information. Employing a critical thinking approach, each volume includes a variety of assessment tools, discusses basic concepts, suggests key questions, and provides the reader with a list of resources for further exploration.

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WELLNESS:

A Modern Life-Style Library

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Preface

THE HARDEST JOB ON EARTH," according to Dr. Leila Denmark, a 91-year-old pediatrician, "is being a mother." After 61 years of treating children, mostly in rural Georgia, the still active Dr. Denmark feels that many children are being thrown "to the wolves" and if she can put one child on the right track, "this life will be worthwhile."

We know more about child development and parenting today than at any other time in history. But for this information to be put to use, we must want to do the best we can for our children. Unfortunately, this isn't the case for all of the children being brought into this world.

The topic of this volume is a particularly important one. It is my hope that this book will help the reader grapple with at least some of the many important questions related to pregnancy, childbirth, and parenting. Do I want to become a parent? Am I ready to do so? Why is prenatal care so important and what does it involve? What are some of the things that happen during the first years of a child's life? These and other questions are addressed here in a way that will, I hope, be useful to anyone who turns to these pages for assistance.

This is not a definitive work, but rather a place to begin. The central objective of this book is not to make you into an instant expert on pregnancy, childbirth, and parenting, but to help you learn to *think critically* about the health-related claims and counterclaims with which all of us are bombarded daily. Only then will you be able to distinguish fact from myth in this important area, and only then will you be an informed health consumer.

I wish to acknowledge the students that I have had in health classes over the years and recognize the contribution that they have made to this book and others in this series. I am especially indebted to the members of The Dushkin Publishing Group: Rick Connelly, President, for the courage to undertake a project of this magnitude; Irving Rockwood, Program Manager; Paula Edelson, Editor; and Wendy Connal, Administrative Assistant, for their guidance, patience, and encouragement.

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Preparing for Pregnancy

HAVING CHILDREN IS ESSENTIAL to the survival of the human species. It can also be a joyful, emotionally powerful experience. No other experience carries quite the cultural and personal importance that having a baby does, and it is an experience that humans have shared since the beginning of time.

The way a child is conceived and born is, essentially, the same as it ever was: A **sperm** and an **egg** meet, and a fetus develops in the mother's **uterus** and a baby is born approximately 9 months later. Yet today there are many positive changes in social attitudes, medical standards, and parenting methods that make rearing children a vastly different experience from what it was a few generations ago.

The first, most obvious change is that a woman is now able to decide whether she wants children and when she wants to have them. [1] Women who work full-time, for example, may opt to have children later in life or not at all. In addition, advances in medical technology have lowered risks for women giving birth and have increased the chances a baby born prematurely or with medical complications has of leading a normal, healthy life. Finally, we know a great deal more today about proper **prenatal care** to avoid or minimize birth defects and health problems for expectant mothers.

All of this is good news for babies, who are less likely to suffer before and during birth. Another change affects them once they are born: the makeup of the modern family. When asked to describe today's "typical" family in the United States, an observer of the American scene would be hard pressed to give a single, all-encompassing description. There are childless couples, families in which the parents cohabit without marriage, single-parent house-

Sperm: The male's reproductive cell that may fertilize the female's egg cell if the conditions are favorable.

Egg: The female reproductive cell that develops into an embryo if fertilized by sperm.

Uterus: The muscular, pear-shaped organ of the female's reproductive system, in which a fertilized egg embeds itself and becomes a fetus.

Prenatal care: Care of a pregnant woman and her baby throughout pregnancy, with the goal of ensuring the good health of both at delivery.

FIGURE 1.1
Mother and Child



Artificial insemination: The fertilization of an egg through means other than sexual intercourse.

Fertility drugs: Medication that may enhance the production of reproductive hormones and facilitate conception.

In vitro fertilization: A method of conceiving a child by surgically removing the ovum, fertilizing it outside the body, and then implanting it in the uterus of the mother. Children born as a result of this method are popularly called "test-tube" babies.

Surrogate mother: A woman who has agreed with an infertile couple to be artificially inseminated with the man's sperm or implanted with the couple's fertilized egg and carry the pregnancy to term, in order to aid that couple in having their own biological child.

An event of singular importance, no other experience carries quite the same personal and cultural significance as having a baby.

holds, stepparent and stepchild relationships under one roof or several, gay and lesbian couples who may or may not have children, and the traditional married man and woman with their children. Today fewer than one American household in 5 is inhabited by the traditional "nuclear family." [2] This does not mean that the family is a threatened institution. On the contrary, it appears to mean that the family is so important that its value endures even as its framework adjusts to fit changing situations and cultural upheavals.

Today's parents can range from a teenage mother rearing a child on her own to a married couple in their late 30s having their first child after years of trying to conceive. It can involve **artificial insemination**, the use of **fertility drugs**, **in vitro fertilization**, or even **surrogate mothers**. No matter how it comes about,

(continued on p. 6)

Families and Children in the Year 2000

Changes over the past two decades affecting the lives of children provide the backdrop for describing the social, economic and demographic circumstances of childhood between now and the end of this century. Children as a group are nearly totally dependent upon the individual and collective actions of a number of social and economic institutions. The ability of these institutions to meet the needs of children have important immediate and long-range or developmental consequences for the structure and quality of life for children. One of those institutions is the family. Family, in the broadest definition, encompasses a variety of living arrangements. This article focuses on this broad concept of family to give an overview of several important recent trends influencing families in general and children in particular.

Most major trends involving family life appear to have leveled off or established a predictable (for the meantime) pattern, and it seems likely that conditions which generally characterize childhood in 1987 will prevail in the year 2000. Patterns of childbearing, marriage, divorce, remarriage, and employment in the paid labor force of mothers have changed dramatically during the past 20 years.

Age at Marriage

The ages at which young brides and grooms have been marrying for the first time have been increasing rather steadily since the 1960s. In fact, in the last decade alone, the estimated median age at first marriage for men and women has risen by about two full years reaching 25.7 for men and 23.1 for women in 1986. About one-third of all women and one-half of all men who were 25 years old in 1986 had never been married, in each case more than doubling the percent never married for 25-year-olds in 1970. Some people have suggested that these age-at-marriage trends indicate a movement toward a much greater proportion of the adult population never marrying at all. There is not much doubt that proportionally fewer young adults today will ever marry than has historically been true in the United States.

Nevertheless, the vast majority of men and women will eventually marry. Probably about nine of every 10 young adults today will marry during their adult years as compared with a standard of about 95 percent ever marrying for previous generations.

A later age at first marriage has important implications for children and their families. If the long-standing inverse relationship between age at marriage and likelihood of divorce continues, then marital stability will increase. Recent studies have reaffirmed the association between age at marriage and "marital success," and this and other factors may contribute to a decrease in divorce in the next several years. However, the expected decline in divorce is not forecast to be precipitous and the U.S. will likely continue to be among the countries with the highest divorce rates in the world.

Another consequence of later marriage is that more young adults have the time for pursuing educational and career goals without the limitations of family responsibilities. The investments made by young adults in education and work are likely to be looked upon for lifelong returns. This is especially important for determining the structure of family life after these people have married. The percent of married couple families with both spouses in the paid work force is likely to continue to increase regardless of whether childbearing has begun or not. However, once children are born, the dimension of child care becomes a major concern because parents are more likely than ever before to continue in the paid work force after childbirth. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that in the last decade the labor force participation rate for women with very young children (under three years old) has increased from one-third to one-half. Labor force participation rates for all mothers have increased markedly and, in general, the older the children the more likely the mother is to be in the paid work force.

The most notable increase in working among mothers has been for women in married couple

families. Currently, more than six in 10 married women with a husband and children under 18 present in the home are in the paid labor force. However, among all mothers with children present, women maintaining single-parent families are still the most likely to be in the labor force. Clearly, what was once the exception regarding working wives and mothers is now the rule, and one result of this shift is an emerging demand by working parents for an accommodation of their child care needs.

Recent studies show that there has been no measurable increase in what is popularly termed "latchkey" situations but that for all children there has been an increased use of "alternative" types of child care. Parents are moving away from using care in the child's home and care in another private home to group care arrangements like those provided by day care centers and nursery schools. Data show that in the short span of years between 1982 and 1985, the percent of mothers employed full time who used organized child care for their youngest child under five rose from 20 percent to 30 percent. Also, a surprising proportion of children whose mothers are in the labor force are reported as cared for by a parent. This may suggest some accommodation in the work place for the child care needs of workers. It may also reflect what one social scientist has termed a trend toward the "destandardization of American work life," meaning more flexitime, shiftwork, etc. It seems reasonable to expect that high labor force participation rates for both parents in 2-parent families and for persons maintaining single-parent families are here to stay, as are the attending concerns about child care.

There are other, more subtle changes occurring in family life that are associated with the increased labor force participation of mothers and fathers who have young children at home. These changes involve the roles husbands and wives and children play vis-à-vis each other in a changing home environment. New research on interaction among family members is needed to assess the nature and consequences of these changes.

Another development associated with later

age at marriage is a drop in family size. Postponement of marriage usually means postponement of childbearing. As the age at childbearing has increased and as effective measures of fertility control have become widely available *and used* (allowing more parents to achieve a balance between family, job and other aspirations), fertility has declined. Women are currently bearing children at a rate of slightly under two per woman. The fertility rate in this country has not changed appreciably over the last decade, nor is it expected to change in the near future. Birth expectations of young women indicate little change is likely to occur in desired family size in the next several years. Young women today expect to have, on average, about two children per woman when they have completed their childbearing. Small families, for several reasons, will remain the norm in our society for the foreseeable future.

Later age at marriage also results in a larger at-risk period for women to bear children before marriage. Increasingly more single-parent situations involve a never-married mother and her child(ren). Today, one of every five of the seven million single-parent families is maintained by a never-married woman.

In summary, a major change in age at first marriage for men and women has been associated with several important changes in family life for parents and children. There are more working parents and presumably less time is available for parent-child interaction; families are smaller and children therefore have fewer siblings; married couples may be less likely to divorce; on average parents are older and perhaps more established than in the past; and more single-parent families are created by never-married women having babies.

Divorce

Nearly everyone is familiar with the litany of divorce statistics covering trends in the U.S. over the past 20 years. Between 1965 (when the incidence of divorce began to turn upward) and 1980, the divorce rate doubled, reaching a point where one of every two marriages could be expected to end in divorce.

Since 1980, there has been little change in the

divorce rate and there is some reason to expect the rate to drop somewhat in the near future. Factors such as an increasing age at first marriage, recognition of the heavy societal costs of divorce, the ending of a period of dramatic institutional change in this country and the beginning of a period of adaptation to new circumstances surrounding marriage are associated with the predictions of a drop in divorce. Irrespective of causation, it does not appear that the drop in the divorce rate will alter the position of the U.S. as the country with the highest reported divorce rate in the world. Thus, the serious consequences of a large portion of the population, especially children, experiencing the trauma of a marriage breaking up will remain a major concern for society.

A direct result of a high divorce rate is a growth in the number and percent of people who live in single-parent situations. In recent years, divorce has been the largest contributor to the growth in the number of one-parent families. About 43 percent of all one-parent families in 1986 were maintained by a divorced parent. Nine of every 10 single-parent families in the U.S. are mother-child(ren) families—a statistic that has remained virtually unchanged over the past 30 years. These families suffer more deprivation than other families. For example, about 60 percent of the children under 18 years old in mother-child families live in poverty, compared to approximately 25 percent of the under-18 child population as a whole. Single-parent families are characterized by high minority representation, low education and high residential mobility. In short, they are a group with little equity or stature in U.S. society and yet a group with usually pressing social and economic needs involving housing, social and psychological services, work place considerations and child care, to name a few. Currently, close to one-fourth of the nation's 60 million children under 18 live with only one parent.

Furthermore, because being in a one-parent family is a temporary status for many, the chances of a child under 18 ever experiencing living with only one parent for at least one year are greater than one in two. The lifetime likelihood for a child to live in a one-parent family probably will not

change significantly in the near future and, consequently, it is important to remind those whose responsibility is to provide in some way for the well-being of children of the prevalence of this experience.

A natural consequence of the high divorce rate in the U.S. has been an increasing pool of people eligible for remarriage. The primary reason that living in a one-parent family is a transitional status for many is that about 80 percent of people who divorce eventually remarry, not necessarily to each other. (A secondary reason for the transitional nature of the one-parent family is that the vast majority of women who bear children before marriage eventually do marry.) Remarriage is leading to an increase in the number and percent of families involving "step" relationships and other previously "atypical" family relationships (the presence of one or more combinations of step-siblings or half-siblings, for example).

Sixteen percent of all married-couple families today involve step situations, and there is little question that this proportion will continue to grow. The introduction of a substantial number of stepfamilies, blended families and/or reconstituted families into U.S. society has happened so fast that there is little well-documented information about the impact of this phenomenon on the lives of children. The small but rapidly growing body of knowledge about these families indicates that stepfamilies are more complex and, in some respects, more fragile than other families. A major challenge for researchers during the next several years will be to learn more about how parents and children in these relationships cope with the circumstances of everyday life and how family members interact in the relatively new family structures that have been identified.

Past fluctuations in fertility trends, immigration and internal migration and improvements in longevity have—and will continue to have—a profound influence on the lives of children in the United States. Even with the fertility rate below replacement level (2.1 births per woman), the absolute annual number of births in the U.S. has been rising since the mid 1970s. This is because of the entry into childbearing ages of women who are members of the disproportionately large