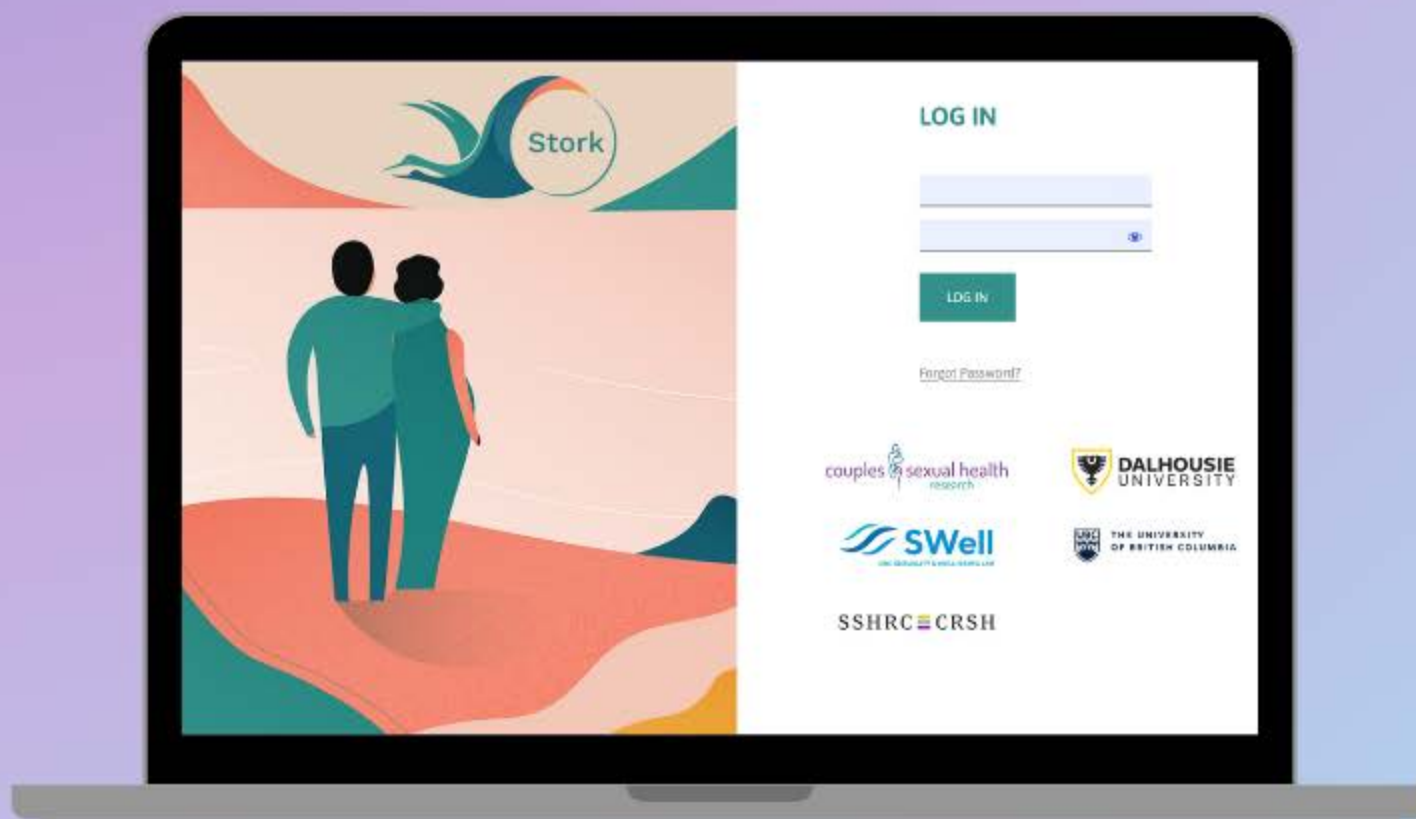


STORK INTRODUCTORY FEASIBILITY

This study looked at the feasibility of **STORK**, a new online program designed to support couples' sexual well-being during the transition to parenthood.



Scroll to see what
we found!



The perinatal period, which encompasses pregnancy up until 12 months postpartum, tends to be an exciting yet challenging period for couples, particularly among first time parents.



Previous research suggests that perinatal sexual well-being is influenced by a range of interacting biological, psychological, relational, and social factors [1, 2].

[1] Fitzpatrick et al. (2021); [2] McBride et al., (2017)

88% of gestational parents (individuals who experience pregnancy) and 44% of non-gestational parents will experience sexual problems which may begin in pregnancy and persist up to 12-months postpartum and beyond [1].

Some examples of the sexual problems parents might experience are sexual distress, low sexual desire, and genito-pelvic pain [1].

[1] Fitzpatrick et al. (2021)

Perinatal sexual difficulties are associated with poorer health and quality of life, increased anxiety and depression, relationship difficulties, less sensitive parenting, and greater healthcare use [3-5].

[3] Diamond & Huebner (2012); [4] Spreacher & Cate (2004); [5] Bernhard (2002)



Only 7–29% of expectant parents receive guidance from healthcare providers about perinatal sexual changes [6–8], despite most wanting this information [9].

[6] Barrett et al. (2000); [7] Bartellas et al. (2000); [8] Woodhouse et al. (1997);
[9] Fitzpatrick et al. (2023)

Providing couples with information about perinatal sexuality is linked to better sexual frequency, satisfaction, and desire, and lower sexual distress [9], highlighting the importance of supporting both partners during this period [1, 10].

[1] Fitzpatrick et al. (2021); [9] Fitzpatrick et al. (2023); [10] Rusbult & Arriaga (1997)

Existing evidence suggests that brief, accessible, and couples-focused psychoeducational interventions can improve perinatal sexual and relationship outcomes, but current programs are often reactive, exclude one partner, or require in-person attendance, highlighting the need for accessible, preventive, and couple-based approaches [11–14].

[11] Sheikhi et al. (2020); [12] Rosen et al. (2021); [13] Heidari et al. (2018);
[14] Bahadoran et al. (2015)



Supporting the Transition to parenthood through Online sexual and Relationship Knowledge (STORK)

was created to address the limitations of existing interventions and is the first online couple-based program designed to support first time parents.

The STORK program has 6 modules in total which are taken by the couple during pregnancy (5 modules) and the postpartum (1 module). **This study focuses on the introductory portion of the STORK program**, which includes the orientation module and the first content module.

WE WANTED TO KNOW:

OVERARCHING RESEARCH QUESTION

Are the introductory STORK modules feasible, acceptable, and useful for couples expecting their first child?

SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1

To what extent is the STORK platform functional and easy to navigate?

2

How acceptable is the program content to users?

3

To what extent do users perceive the content as relevant, clear, and inclusive/representative?

4

How reasonable do users perceive the time commitment to be?



N = 11

couples in **committed partnerships**
with **one parent 12-25 weeks pregnant**
with **both partners' first child**.

Couples **completed the first two STORK modules** during a 2-hour researcher-supported session.

Afterwards, each partner completed a **brief survey** and a **semi-structured interview** about the program's usability, content, and overall experience.



WE FOUND THAT...

Participants reported **high acceptability**

Both modules were reported to be...

- **Clear and logical**
- **Enjoyable**
- **Helpful**
- **Relevant**

Participants found the information highly relevant and thought-provoking, noting that they learned about or considered things they had not previously thought about.

Participants enjoyed reflecting on the content and communicating with their partner, particularly having opportunities to learn about their partner's perspective and discuss topics they had not previously discussed.

Participants appreciated the program's efforts to promote inclusivity, particularly through inclusive language and diverse representation.

The platform was easy to navigate, visually appealing, and highly inclusive.

95.5% of participants found the time commitment reasonable, and 91% felt it was feasible to complete a module with their partner each week.



SO, WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN?

This study provided **preliminary support for the feasibility of the introductory STORK modules**. Participants responded positively to the platform, describing it as **user-friendly, engaging, and relevant, with the clarity, inclusivity, and ability to spark meaningful conversations** highlighted as key strengths.



Therefore, **STORK** may help address the gap in **perinatal sexual health education** by providing couples with **accessible, evidence-based information and tools to navigate sexual changes during the transition to parenthood.**



EXPECTING YOUR FIRST BABY?



Help us test STORK, the first online program to help couples' navigate changes to their sexual relationship during pregnancy and the postpartum.

WHAT'S INVOLVED

You and your partner will be randomly assigned to complete STORK or be placed on the waitlist*

- 6 educational and skills modules (5 during pregnancy, 1 postpartum), if you are assigned to complete STORK
- 5 online surveys (2 during pregnancy, and 3 postpartum)

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE



- Couples in a married or cohabitating relationship of at least 12 months
- One partner must be $\leq$ 26 weeks pregnant with their first baby
- STORK is open to individuals of all genders, bodies, and sexual orientations

Individuals can receive an honorarium for participating.



To participate, scan the QR code & fill in the contact form or visit: <https://cqr.to/LLiBqw>



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SSHRC  CRSH

IWK REB #1032510

*Couples assigned to the waitlist will receive access to the STORK program after the waitlist period.

THIS IS A SUMMARY OF OUR PUBLISHED ARTICLE:

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Infographic by Audrey Chu