

PUBLIC HEALTH IN SIMCOE MUSKOKA

As champions of health for all, the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit works with individuals, families, agencies and communities to promote and protect health and to prevent disease and injury. We offer a wide range of programs and services, including:



Health protection

Safe food inspection, safe water monitoring, rabies education and investigation, health hazard investigation and environmental issues.



Healthy living

Injury prevention, alcohol and other substance misuse prevention, active living, healthy eating and weights, healthy schools, sun safety, tobacco-free living and Smoke-free Ontario Act enforcement.



Parenting, child and family health

Prenatal classes and counseling, Healthy Babies Healthy Children program, Triple P (Positive Parenting Program), child development and screening, dental screening and preventive services for school children and children of low-income families.



Infectious disease control and immunization

School immunization programs, vaccine and clinics, communicable disease monitoring and sexual health counseling and clinics.



Social determinants of health

Strategies to address the factors (income, housing, education, etc.) that create poor health outcomes for people, particularly vulnerable populations.

FOR MORE INFORMATION...

To learn more about any of the issues in this resource, please visit our website at: www.smdhu.org, or contact Health Connection.

Health Connection

Free confidential health information and advice at your fingertips
1-877-721-7520 www.smdhu.org



Let's Make

HEALTH

A Priority

A healthy population is the key to productive, vibrant and economically strong communities in Simcoe Muskoka.

Decisions made by our municipal government impact all aspects of our lives. Many of these decisions play an important role in promoting and protecting our health.

Active communities, a clean environment, and ensuring health for all people regardless of background or income level are key considerations in municipal decision-making.

Local Councils can make health a priority by considering health in all decisions and by implementing programs and developing policies that reduce preventable illness, injury and death and improve overall health in Simcoe and Muskoka.



HEALTH ISSUES AND ACTIONS FOR MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

FOOD ACCESS

- ❑ Implement land use planning policies that protect and conserve land and water used to produce food.
- ❑ Ensure healthy food is available in every neighbourhood through planning policies and support for local programs, such as community gardens and kitchens.



Community gardens, farmers' markets and other initiatives that improve neighbourhood access to safe, nutritious and personally-acceptable food contribute to overall health and help to create people-friendly public spaces and new income sources for local food producers.

POVERTY

- ❑ Participate in local poverty reduction initiatives and support provincial and federal actions that address broader issues affecting poverty, such as employment, income and education.
- ❑ Support economic development strategies that will attract full time jobs that pay an adequate wage.

Lower income = Higher health risks



Income is the biggest determinant of a person's health and quality of life. Those living on low income often have higher rates of chronic diseases and are more likely to die early than those who are better off financially. Reducing poverty builds our economy and gives more people the opportunity to make meaningful contributions to society.

ALCOHOL

- ❑ Establish policies that minimize alcohol-related harm by limiting alcohol outlet density and the availability of alcohol at public events.
- ❑ Advocate for the creation of a provincial alcohol strategy.



Drinking alcohol can cause injuries and a broad range of chronic diseases and social harms. Increased access and availability of alcohol leads to greater consumption, resulting in more harm to society, including increased crime and related policing costs.

WATER FLUORIDATION

- ❑ Commence community water fluoridation to improve oral health for all, particularly those most vulnerable due to low income and/or social circumstances.
- ❑ Maintain and support water fluoridation in communities that currently have a fluoridated water system.



Fluoride in drinking water helps protect teeth against decay. Community water fluoridation is the most equitable and cost effective way to deliver fluoride and improve oral health for everyone, regardless of age, education or income level.

About 1 in 10 Simcoe Muskoka households experience food insecurity. On a limited income, food becomes a flexible expense often resulting in a less healthy diet and increased risk of chronic disease. If everyone on social assistance in our area was able to spend \$10 a week on local food, it would add almost \$11 million per year to the local farm economy.



FOOD SECURITY

- ❑ Improve access for those with limited income to community-based food programs and services.
- ❑ Support your local food charter by implementing at least one activity that will help to build a local sustainable food system.

Shelter is a basic need for optimal health. Being homeless or living in unaffordable, inadequate and unsafe housing can lead to increased illness, poor mental health and premature death. Making housing affordable enables residents to have funds available to spend in their communities, which contributes to local economic growth.



HOUSING

- ❑ Build inclusive neighbourhoods, planned and designed to increase resident safety, connectedness and well-being.
- ❑ Provide a range of affordable housing options, including rental accommodation, to meet your community's needs.

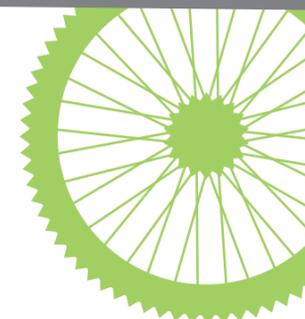
Air pollution is linked to many chronic cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, and is estimated to be the cause of approximately 400 premature deaths in Simcoe Muskoka in 2014. The greatest source of air pollution is energy production and vehicle use.



AIR QUALITY

- ❑ Manage vehicle emissions through the implementation of municipal fleet management policies and community anti-idling bylaws.
- ❑ Implement initiatives to improve air quality such as a tree conservation bylaw or retrofitting of municipal buildings to be more energy efficient.

Complete and compact community design that provides access to walking, cycling and public transit enables residents to be physically active. It can also reduce upfront and ongoing municipal infrastructure costs.



ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

- ❑ Integrate local land use and transportation planning to support greater active transportation and public transit development and use.
- ❑ Allocate funding for active transportation infrastructure and public transit in the municipal budget.