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DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

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Your Health Connection



# Health MATTERS

DECEMBER 2008

## Holiday travels in mind?

### Remember the Immunization '3 Rs'

*More residents of Simcoe Muskoka are travelling abroad than ever before.*

It's not just retired people with the time to travel. Families with young children, business travellers, and young adults seeking adventure before settling down to the responsibilities of adult life; they are all heading out of province or out of country.

Travel destinations are as diverse as the travellers themselves, with unique conditions in each locale. Each destination should be assessed to decide what is needed to keep the traveller healthy. Immunization is one important part of a travel health assessment.

Travel immunization is grouped into three categories: routine, recommended and required.

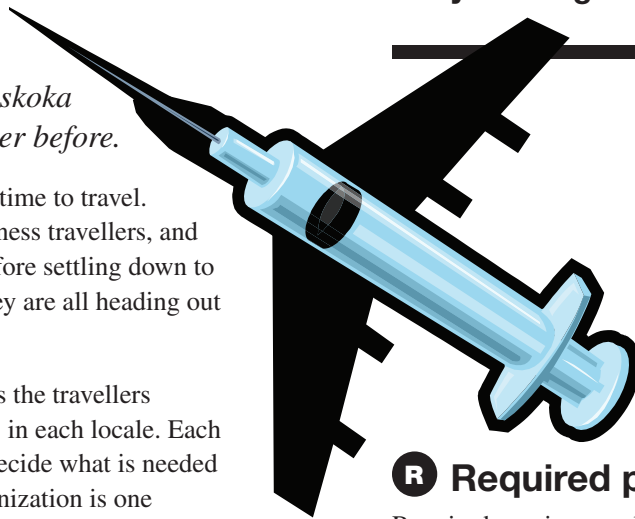
#### **R** A matter of routine

Routine immunizations include all those that are part of routine childhood and adult schedules: tetanus, diphtheria, polio, pertussis, Haemophilus influenza b, measles, mumps and rubella. By talking to your health care provider you can learn whether you or any of your family needs to be updated for any of these routine immunizations. In fact, travel is often a good opportunity to update routine immunizations.

#### **R** Recommended by health professionals

Recommended immunizations protect against diseases such as typhoid, hepatitis A and/or B, rabies, Japanese encephalitis, meningitis, tick-borne encephalitis fever, cholera and E. coli (sometimes the cause of traveller's diarrhea). The recommendation for these

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vaccines depends upon a careful assessment of personal health history, destination, type of travel, accommodation and activities planned while travelling. You may need to consider your travel budget, too, since most of these vaccines are not publicly funded. They may, however, be covered under individual health plans.

#### **R** Required procedure

Required vaccines are less common and are related to specific destinations and activities. You won't be allowed into countries where a particular disease occurs without proof of vaccination against the disease. Vaccines are also needed for entry into a country after you have visited a country where a disease exists. Yellow fever and Meningococcal vaccine are two examples of required travel immunizations. Proof of having received these vaccines, with World Health Organization-approved documents, is required. Your health care provider or travel clinic practitioner can find out if any vaccines are required for your specific destination and travel plans.

There are many things to consider when planning for a trip. And immunization is just as important as booking the best flight and having travel health insurance. Health Canada recommends that travellers seek pre-travel advice at least eight weeks prior to travel. You may need even more time if the destination is more unusual or remote or extreme activities are in your plans.

Ask your health care provider or check out the Health Canada website for the travel clinic nearest you at [www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca) and use the search tool to find travel medicine clinics.



# Keep it healthy, at pool or spa

*Swimming is an excellent recreational and fitness activity and spa waters can be very therapeutic. Thanks to the wide-spread availability of indoor public pools and spas we are able to enjoy swimming all year round.*

However, there are some things to remember to stay healthy and injury free.

There is a risk of contracting illness in pools and spas. It can happen by swallowing, inhaling, or having contact with contaminated water. A wide variety of conditions can result including gastrointestinal, skin, eye, ear, respiratory and wound infections. One of the more commonly reported symptoms associated with pools and spas is diarrhea. People with diarrhea should refrain from using a pool or spa to prevent passing illness to others.

Spas in particular are often linked to skin illnesses. The germs causing skin infections reproduce well in the higher water temperatures and smaller bodies of water in spas.

Spa water, even when properly maintained, can also be risky for people who smoke, have breathing problems, lung disease or high blood pressure. The heat and chemicals in the spa can irritate sensitive individuals. It's wise for people with these conditions to limit the amount of time they spend in the spa – or at least consult a physician before use.

## Before entering a pool or spa

It is important to take a shower with soap and water before entering a public pool or spa to reduce the bacteria and organic matter naturally present on our bodies. Always wash after using the toilet. Never swallow the pool or spa water; in fact, avoid getting water in your mouth, as pool and spa water is not sterile.

If you have your child at the pool, take them for bathroom breaks, and check diapers often. Always change diapers in a bathroom or a diaper-changing area – never at poolside – as germs can spread to surfaces and objects in and around the pool and infect others. Make sure to wash your child afterwards too.



## Other tips to keep in mind while using public pools and spas

- Read and obey all signs posted around the area
- Avoid alcohol consumption
- Know where the emergency phone is located
- Keep an eye on your children at all times
- To avoid injury, do not run on the deck or around the pool or spa
- Pregnant women should avoid the use of hot tubs, hot baths, steam rooms or saunas because the high levels of heat increase a woman's internal body temperature, creating risks to the baby.

For more information on public pool and spa safety, call *Your Health Connection* at 721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520 to speak with a public health professional or visit the health unit website at [www.simcoemuskokahealth.org](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org).



# Turn your neighbourhood into a walkable community

*Did you know that walking is the number one physical activity for Canadians of all ages? Surveys show we prefer low-cost, unstructured activities that can be done outside recreation facilities. Walking, hiking and bicycling all fit the bill perfectly.*

According to Health Canada’s Physical Activity guidelines, 60 minutes of physical activity every day will keep you healthy, and improve your health. If you make walking or biking a regular part of your day—even a number of short intervals through the day—those minutes will add up quickly.

Each year the average Canadian makes 2,000 car trips of less than three kilometres. These trips could easily be made on foot or by bike, and sometimes taking a bike might even make the trip faster. Walking, cycling, skateboarding or roller blading these short distances will benefit your health and the environment.

## Getting into the habit

- Plan to make lunch at work a walking break. Look for trails or sidewalks that will lead away from your workplace to interesting destinations.
- Talk about forming a walking club with your co-workers.
- Plan with your child to make walking or biking to school an everyday activity. You could talk to your school principal about setting up a “walking bus” program.
- If you don’t have a dog to walk then make a date with your neighbour’s dog. Dogs love to walk and dog owners love a tired dog.

## Is your town walking friendly?

Good community design encourages people to use their cars less and to choose walking more often. Walkable communities have schools, stores, services and places to work and play located within a safe and easy walk, reducing the need to drive. Communities that support walking as a main mode of transportation create health, environmental, safety, social and economic benefits for everyone.



According to the Ontario College of Family Physicians not all communities are designed for walking. “The evidence clearly shows that people who live in spread-out, car-dependent neighbourhoods are likely to walk less, weigh more, and suffer from obesity and high blood pressure...”

People who live in walkable neighbourhoods take trips on foot or by bike nearly four times as often as people who live in places with poor pedestrian environments. They’re also more likely to use public transit, making three times as many transit trips. If we want more people walking, it is important for us to make walking as easy as possible.

## Some easy things YOU can do

- Make a pledge to drive less and move more; pick a destination you would normally drive to and walk or cycle.
- Take a walk in your community and fill out a checklist to see if it is walkable.
- Talk or write to your elected official about why you think building walkable communities is important.
- Organize an Active and Safe Routes to School program in your school.
- Organize a group to address walkability in your community.

For information and resources to help you out on any of these ideas visit [www.icanwalk.ca](http://www.icanwalk.ca) website.





# Safe Roads...Your Call

*Police and community partners have joined in a successful campaign to fight impaired driving.*

Late in 2007, Staff Sergeant Steve Wilson of the South Simcoe Police Service and Jason Larkin president of the Barrie-Simcoe Chapter of MADD spearheaded the decision to bring *Safe Roads...Your Call* to Simcoe County. That year, the local RIDE24/7 community coalition had been looking for a way to raise awareness of the community's role in reducing and preventing harm from impaired drivers.

The group found *Safe Roads...Your Call*, which had been developed in 2006 by York Regional Police Service in response to continually high rates of alcohol-involved collisions, injuries and deaths on their roads. The program met with overwhelming success in York.

The time was right and MADD, RIDE24/7 and the South Simcoe Police came together in partnership with the County of Simcoe to make *Safe Roads...Your Call* a reality in our communities. The program was launched on April 22, 2008.

*Safe Roads...Your Call* has involved the community at many levels. First, road signs were posted at key points on county roads, encouraging the public to call 911 to report a suspected impaired driver. Impaired driving is an emergency and the *Safe Roads...Your Call* campaign encourages members of the public to treat it that way.

In addition to the road signs, public education has been a key part of the success of *Safe Roads* in York Region and in Simcoe County. Sponsors like the A Channel have made it possible to produce and air two television public service announcements and Rock 95 plays a radio public service announcement as well.

Police involvement is key to the campaign. When a call reporting a suspected impaired driver is received, dispatchers ensure that the highest priority is given to the response. Available vehicles are dispatched based on the information given by the caller. If appropriate, roadside breath testing is completed and the drinking driver is removed from the road. At R.I.D.E. check stops, police officers across Simcoe County have been distributing notepads that highlight things to watch for and the kind of information that is helpful to report.



## Is it working?

In a word, yes! Since the launch in April, Barrie Police Service and South Simcoe Police Service have received 427 calls reporting a suspected impaired driver, and have made 78 arrests as a result of those calls. Police and the public working together – now, that's teamwork!

The concept of reporting impaired driving is not specific to alcohol impairment. Police want to hear about erratic driving of any kind, including drug impairment. In fact, legislation is being passed dealing with drug impairment on our roads, and officers are training in roadside testing to detect drug impairment.



### SIGNS OF AN IMPAIRED DRIVER

Swerving/weaving in and out of traffic

Inconsistent speed

Slow/fast response to traffic signals

Tailgating

No headlights

Turn signals left on

Makes wide turns

Driving with windows down

## To Report An Impaired Driver

- Call 9-1-1
- Follow instructions of the dispatcher
- State your location & direction of travel
- Note vehicle description and license plate.

