



Health MATTERS

March 2010

Food recalls

Keeping foods from biting you back

Preventing foodborne illness is a priority for the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit. The job includes inspecting food premises, providing training for food handlers and investigating food complaints.

The health unit also works closely with other agencies involved with food safety. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) issues national food recalls and advisories.

Some recent examples of food recalls and advisories in Canada include:

- ◆ summer 2008's extensive recall of ready-to-eat deli meats linked to a Listeria outbreak;
- ◆ recall of numerous foods containing peanut products possibly contaminated with Salmonella bacteria in 2009;
- ◆ another Listeria related recall of processed meats took place just before Christmas 2009.

Listeria bacteria can be found everywhere—in soil, vegetation and animal and human waste. Salmonella bacteria are common in raw meat, milk or eggs. Some people who handle or eat contaminated foods may not become ill. For others, symptoms can be very mild. For more susceptible people such as the elderly, very young, pregnant women and those with weakened immune systems, foodborne bacteria can cause devastating and sometimes life-threatening illnesses.



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Partners in food safety

When a food recall is issued by the CFIA, steps are taken to prevent people from consuming the food.

- ◆ The health unit may help alert consumers and food premises about the recall.
- ◆ Public health inspectors may double-check that health and long-term care facilities know about the recall. Sometimes day nurseries or school cafeterias need to be alerted.
- ◆ Site visits of local grocery stores and supermarkets are made when needed to check that recalled product has been removed from shelves, or to collect product samples for further testing.

The goal is to minimize the chance that any unsafe product will be consumed, especially by those who could become seriously ill.

Investigating illness

The health unit also investigates reports from individuals or their health care providers of foodborne illness and complaints of food poisoning. This involves a detailed analysis of what the individual ate prior to developing nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Inspectors will ask if the individuals have eaten any recalled food. This often leads to the inspection of a food premise and collection of food samples for testing. The individuals are given advice to minimize spread of the illnesses to others (such as family members or persons they care for) and to dispose of any food product that has been recalled.

To be alerted about food recalls and advisories you can sign up for email notices by visiting the Canadian Food Inspection Agency website at www.inspection.gc.ca and click on Email Notification.



Another benefit of breastfeeding

Prevention of childhood overweight and obesity

Breastfeeding has many known benefits to both mother and child. Good nutrition, emotional nurturing and promotion of a healthy immune system are just a few.

Growing evidence also suggests that preventing weight problems starts early in life with the way babies are fed. Breastfeeding could protect your child from becoming overweight or obese.

Breastfeed for six months or more

Research shows the longer a mother breastfeeds her baby, the lower the risk of overweight in the child. For each month of breastfeeding up to nine months of age, the chances of overweight decrease by four per cent. This is more than a 30 per cent drop in the risk of overweight, compared to a child who was never breastfed.

Exclusive breastfeeding appears to be better at protecting against childhood overweight and obesity than breastfeeding along with formula feeding. While more research is needed, it's generally recognized that feeding a baby only breast milk for the first six months is the healthiest choice. According to Health Canada, "Infants should be introduced to nutrient-rich, solid foods with particular attention to iron at six months with continued breastfeeding for up to two years and beyond."

Statistics show that current rates of breastfeeding fall short of these goals. According to the Canadian Community Health Survey, in 2005, 91 per cent of recent mothers aged 15 to 55 in Simcoe



Muskoka initiated breastfeeding with their last child. Nearly half (48 per cent) of recent mothers reported breastfeeding for at least six months and less than one-quarter (23 per cent) reported exclusively breastfeeding for at least six months.

Health benefits for life

Breastfeeding's benefits can last a lifetime. Studies suggest that protection against overweight and obesity may last into the teen years and adulthood. Since overweight and obese children have a high risk of becoming overweight and obese adults, breastfeeding could reduce heart disease and other diseases related to obesity.

How could breastfeeding reduce risk of childhood overweight and obesity?

◆ *Breastfed babies self-regulate*

Breastfed infants control the amount of milk they drink by responding to internal cues that they are full. Infants fed from a bottle may be encouraged to feed beyond that point.

◆ *Breastfed babies have lower insulin concentration*

Another possible factor is that insulin concentrations in the blood may vary with the way the baby is fed. Higher insulin concentrations, seen in formula-fed infants, stimulate more deposit of fat tissue, which in turn increases weight gain.

◆ *Breastfeeding may influence leptin in a good way*

Concentrations of leptin, the hormone that is thought to inhibit appetite and control body fatness, have been shown to be more favourable in children who had the highest intake of breast milk early in life.

More research is needed into the influence breastfeeding has on overweight and obesity. But it is clear there is a relationship between breastfeeding and healthy weight. One more reason to support and promote breastfeeding as a best start for children.



How many pounds?

Weight gain during pregnancy needs to be watched

Gaining weight is a normal part of a healthy pregnancy. However, gaining too much or too little weight can lead to complications with both pregnancy and birth.

Women who gain too much weight in pregnancy tend to keep this extra weight for up to three years after the baby is born. A major concern with retaining extra weight after a baby's birth is that it might shift a woman into a higher BMI category. This increases her risk of experiencing birth complications and may increase her risk of developing maternal health issues in future pregnancies.

Over time, being overweight or obese puts all women at increased risk of chronic diseases like heart disease and diabetes.

New help from Health Canada

To help women gain a healthy amount of weight during pregnancy, Health Canada has recently updated its pregnancy weight gain guidelines.

The Body Mass Index (BMI) uses weight and height to create a score for the amount of body fat a person has. It is often used to calculate overweight and obesity rates. In 2007 in Simcoe and Muskoka, 34.1 per cent of women of childbearing age (age 20-44) reported a BMI ranking them as overweight or obese. More work needs to be done to help women in this age range achieve a healthy weight before they become pregnant.

Pregnancy weight gain guidelines

Health Canada's new recommendations

- ◆ are based on the mother's BMI before she becomes pregnant
- ◆ use the World Health Organization's (WHO) definitions of underweight (BMI less than 18.5), normal weight (BMI of 18.5 to 24.9), overweight (BMI of 25.0 to 29.9) and obese (BMI of 30 or greater)
- ◆ now include a suggested rate of weight gain per week, in addition to recommendations for total weight gain during pregnancy
- ◆ have a specific recommendation of total weight gain for obese women.

Focus on healthy weights





Women who are considering having a baby should focus on maintaining or reaching a healthy weight before getting pregnant. When pregnant, a woman should aim to gain within the recommended weight gain range for her BMI. Trying to lose weight while pregnant is not recommended.

Health professionals have long recognized that a nutritious diet and regular physical activity are important in achieving and maintaining healthy weight. Breastfeeding has also been shown to play a part in keeping to a healthy weight after having a baby.

As always, women should talk to their health care provider about their BMI and healthy weight recommendations, before, during and after pregnancy.



Recommended Weight Gain During Pregnancy by Pre-pregnancy BMI

Pre-pregnancy BMI		Rates of Weight Gain* 2nd and 3rd Trimester Average/week (range) in lb	Total Weight Gain (range) in lb
	underweight BMI <18.5	1 (1-1.3)	28-40
	normal weight BMI is 18.5-24.9	1 (.8-1)	25-35
	overweight BMI is 25.0-29.9	0.6 (.5-.7)	15-25
	obese BMI >30.0	0.5 (.4-.6)	11-20

*Calculations assume a 0.5-2 kg (1.1-4.4 lb) weight gain in the first trimester

Dental services—a valuable help to families

In our tough economic times, finding free services is a bonus for families.

You can do a lot to protect your children's dental health without any cost, thanks to the services the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit dental services team offers at schools and health unit offices.

School dental screenings provide information on the oral health status of children in Simcoe and Muskoka. This information assists in planning dental programs at both the local and provincial level. But for you, it can also pinpoint dental problems your child needs to have treated.

If the elementary school dental screening shows your child needs the attention of a dentist, you will be notified. A health unit registered dental hygienist will phone to follow up with you and review the forms you received at home. The hygienist will explain the importance of timely treatment and help you overcome any barriers to your child getting the necessary care.

For families without dental coverage and who can't cover the cost of dental care, there is CINOT—the Children in Need of Treatment program. This program covers urgent conditions such as large cavities or infections. CINOT is funded provincially and locally. This dental funding program was expanded in 2009 to include teens up to their 18th birthday. Parents can book an appointment to have their children screened by calling the health unit at 721-7520, extension 8804 or 1-877-721-7520 extension 8804.

Help from the health unit

Dental screening may show your child could benefit from some preventive help. The health unit's dental team can offer service here as well, with fluoride treatment, pit and fissure sealants or scaling.

For stronger teeth – Fluoride is a mineral that helps strengthen or repair tooth enamel that has been weakened and is in early stages of decay. It also makes the enamel of the tooth stronger and more resistant to the acids that cause tooth decay.

Extra protection – Pit and fissure sealants seal the deep grooves on the chewing surfaces of the permanent molars. This prevents food and bacteria from getting trapped there and therefore prevents cavities.

An extra scrub – Scaling is provided to remove hardened deposits on the teeth. This hardened deposit can cause irritation to the gum tissue.

All these services are simple procedures and are provided for children in a health unit office or school setting. When provided in a school setting, the child feels more secure, misses little classroom time and feels more comfortable in a familiar environment.

If your child or teen is eligible, you can take advantage of these free preventive services by completing and returning the health history and permission form that is sent home from school with your child.




**WORRIED ABOUT
YOUR KID'S TEETH?**

**CAN'T AFFORD DENTAL TREATMENT?
WE CAN HELP.**

FREE dental services are available to children under age 18 who urgently need care. Contact your local public health unit for information.


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muskoka**
DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

Tel: 721-7520
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