



Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to:

simcoe muskoka
DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

15 Sperring Drive,
Barrie, ON L4M 6K9
Your Health Connection



Health MATTERS

February 2013

Sleep for babies and toddlers

It's heart-warming to watch a baby fall to sleep. The tiny fingers curling up; the little tummy rising and falling.



It's also very important work the baby is doing. Sleep helps a child's brain work properly. It supports new pathways to help her learn, remember, pay attention, problem-solve and be creative. It can affect a child's mood and ability to get along with others.

During sleep, the body releases a hormone that promotes normal growth in children and repairs cells and tissues. Not enough sleep can change the way our immune system responds, which can make it difficult to fight infections.

How much sleep?

The amount of sleep required varies with a child's age and the individual child. On average, newborns need more sleep than older infants, and toddlers can get by with a little less.

Under 2 mths	16-18 hrs/day
Up to 1 yr	14-16 hrs/day
1 to 3 yrs	10-13 hrs/day

Daily sleep can include a combination of longer and shorter times (naps) and depend on many factors like health, hunger and temperament.

Tips to help with sleep

- ◆ Follow your child's cues for sleep and hunger.
- ◆ Place babies in bed when drowsy to help them learn to settle to sleep.

- ▶ Fostering positive mental health 2
- ▶ Walk the talk with your teen..... 3
- ▶ You don't have to be afraid of meat 4

- ◆ Set an environment with low light and little stimulation.
- ◆ When babies are older than six months, start setting some bedtime patterns that include things like baths, reading, brushing teeth, hugs and snuggles, etc.
- ◆ Reduce naps gradually as children approach age 3 (from two per day to one and then to alternate days).

Safe sleep for babies

Should your baby sleep in the same room as you? Yes: It's recommended for the first six months. Use an approved crib for the baby, and avoid crowding the baby's sleeping space with soft items like stuffed animals or pillows. Keeping your home smoke free will further add to your baby's safety. Babies should always be placed on their backs to sleep.

Safe sleep environments for toddlers need to be smoke free as well. Other measures include choosing sleepwear that is tight fitting and made of nylon or polyester (in case of fire) and free from loose buttons or decorations that might be a choking hazard. Keep toys with batteries out of bed.

For detailed information about safe sleep environments, visit the Public Health Agency of Canada website at www.phac-aspc.gc.ca and search for Safe Sleep.

It's normal for parents to have questions or concerns about their child. If you would like more information on sleep and children, or have other child related questions, see the back page of this newsletter for website and phone contacts, or visit www.facebook.com/PlaytogetherGrowtogether.



Fostering positive mental health

Grades, friendships, puberty, making speeches, exams, finding that first job: sometimes we forget that kids have a lot on their plate.

Students often find it's a struggle to maintain positive mental health. Schools are working to help students have the skills and supportive environments they need to be able to learn, grow and be the best they can be.

Common ground

Parents and schools share a common interest in helping young people develop positive mental health. Parents and schools can help young people develop their strengths and talents, feel valued and respected, cared for and understood. These are factors they need to have a positive outlook on, participate in and be successful in life. Stressors in life that are not managed in healthy and positive ways can impede a young person's developing mental health – their emotions, mood and ability to learn and relate to others.



Get support

Parents and children benefit from talking and sharing. There are times when you and your child may need to reach out for support. This is normal. Family, friends and peers can help by listening and sharing ideas and experiences. Doctors, nurses and mental health counsellors can provide reliable information and have further skills to support your family.

What can a parent do to foster good mental health?

- ◆ Show you care by giving your child affection, time and attention.
- ◆ Talk with an optimistic outlook on life.
- ◆ Support kids to set achievable goals at school and home.
- ◆ Give them opportunities to try new skills and celebrate their efforts.
- ◆ Show interest and offer guidance to problem solve. Kids may have difficulty with managing time, peer pressure, fears and worries.
- ◆ Have healthy food available, fun activities and regular sleep routines at home for everyone, including yourself.
- ◆ Join your local healthy school committee where you can help build a positive school environment. It takes minimal time and both your child and the school will appreciate your interest.

If you would like to read more, look for a booklet from the Psychology Foundation of Canada called *Kids Can Cope: Parenting Resilient Children at Home and at School*. A link to a free download of the book can be found at www.psychologyfoundation.org/forParents.php.



Walk the talk with your teen

Remember the old mantra “Do as I say and not as I do”? Not great parenting advice.

Adolescents model and mimic their parents’ behaviours... both as teens and how they intend to behave as adults.

Whether you are the parent, grandparent, legal guardian, coach or older sibling of a teenager, you may not realize the influence you have on their lives and decisions. It is important for you to know that you have a big impact.

Teens are influenced by your ideas of right and wrong and what’s important in life. Kids hear what you say and see what you do. You can make a difference with your attitude, actions and words. This is especially true when it comes to the risk-taking behaviours that teens become involved in like risky driving, drug and alcohol use, violence, etc.

Why do teens enjoy risks?

Adolescence is sometimes referred to as “the risky time,” when deaths from risk-taking increase by 200 per cent.

The parts of the brain that mature first are those controlling physical coordination, emotion and motivation. The part that powers the ability to think, plan, solve problems, make decisions and control emotions is one of the last to mature. In fact it does not fully mature until the age of 25.

The key to moderating risk taking



Research indicates that parents or adults who monitor and are aware of their teen’s activities, friends, beliefs and whereabouts actually have teens who participate in fewer unhealthy risk-taking behaviours. So, is it the actual act of *monitoring* their teen’s behaviour or is it

the *knowledge* that they have gained about their teen that makes this difference?

It turns out that parents who really know their kids – what they do and what they think – have more influence on their behaviour. And teens that have open and honest communication with their parents are more likely to make good choices.



Adolescents who perceive their parents as being ‘in the know’ may be less likely to hang out with and be influenced by the ‘wrong’ crowd of peers.

There is give and take in this open relationship: the teen must be willing to talk with the parent and the parent willing to listen. Some suggestions to build your relationship:

- ◆ Create an environment that is open to and encourages communication.
- ◆ Promote a warm relationship with your teen that makes it safe and easy for your teen to talk and you to listen and respond with sensitivity.
- ◆ Plan fun family activities that are regular and that your teen wants to participate in. Because your teen is likely to feel comfortable, they will also feel it is safe to talk with you.
- ◆ Establish reasonable restrictions and rules with appropriate consequences for breaking these rules.

Parents may neglect the safe behaviours they ask their children to practise, unaware of the influence this has on their teen. So practise what you preach...walk the talk...or however you want to put it and help your teen manage the risks they face in their daily lives.



You don't have to be afraid of meat

In the wake of several food recalls some are wondering how they can trust that their meat is safe to eat.

The following are some tips that will help you from the grocery store to the table.

Grocery shopping

When buying meat from local grocery stores or butchers consider the following advice.

Keep it cold: Cold and frozen foods on your grocery list should be picked up last and put in the refrigerator or freezer as soon as you get home.

Labels: Look for federal or provincial stamp labels or stamps on prepackaged items and check best-before dates.



Separate: Keep meats separate in the cart from other ready-to-eat food items and double-bag meats to prevent juice from spilling and contaminating other foods you have purchased.

Sanitize: Hand sanitizers are usually available in the meat section of the grocery store. Use them after handling packaged meat.

Cooking

Safe handling and cooking of all meat is essential in preventing foodborne illness. Meats are properly cooked when they reach a high internal temperature that will kill harmful bacteria. Use a food thermometer when cooking to be sure proper temperatures have been met before serving.

Mechanically tenderized meat is common. It's a process that has been used by suppliers, restaurants and retailers for many years to improve the tenderness and flavour of cooked beef. You need to cook mechanically tenderized steak and beef cuts to an internal temperature of at least 71 C (160 F). For a more detailed list of proper cooking temperatures visit the health unit's website.



Clean and sanitize

Here are a few more steps to protect yourself and your family against the risks of foodborne illness, including *E. coli*.

- ◆ Wash your hands before and after cooking.
- ◆ Keep knives, counters and cutting boards clean. Sanitize with a kitchen sanitizer (following the directions on the container) or use a bleach solution of 2 ml of chlorine bleach to 1 litre of clean warm water.
- ◆ Keep raw meats separate from other foods when stored.
- ◆ Invest in a food thermometer to accurately check cooking temperature.
- ◆ Refrigerate or freeze leftovers promptly.

Stay informed

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) coordinates food recalls in Canada. CFIA may get a report or conduct its own investigation and determine that a product is unsafe. In such a situation CFIA directs action to remove the product from the marketplace. CFIA then notifies the public through their website, media and email subscriber lists. Join the subscriber list today at www.inspection.gc.ca for a fast, effective way to hear of food recalls and allergy alerts across the country.

If you are concerned about a product you wish to buy or have already purchased, speak to your grocer or call *Your Health Connection* and visit the health unit's website (details below).

