



Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to:

simcoe muskoka
DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

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



Health MATTERS

June 2011

Are you being greenwashed?

A green label doesn't necessarily mean a product is good for the earth. It may only mean that's what the company wants you to think.



We are more aware that human actions can harm the environment. More people want to take measures to protect their environment. We also have a better understanding of how a healthy environment is beneficial to our own personal health.

It is likely a combination of those reasons that draws us to products advertised as being green—we want to make a difference. Industry and advertisers see this desire to go green and as a result, consumers are faced with a wide variety of green products. These products range from paper products (such as toilet paper and paper towels) to light bulbs, appliances, electronics, toys, children's products, personal care and cleaning products.

Claims that appeal to your green side

Have you ever wondered if greenwashing influenced your decision to buy that item?

Greenwashing is a term used to describe products and policies misleadingly marketed to consumers as environmentally friendly.

- ▶ **Screen time – too much? 2**
- ▶ **Healthy eating for healthy learning 3**
- ▶ **Take the bite out of rabies..... 4**

To greenwash a product, advertisers make vague, irrelevant or unproven claims, or insist a product is greener than a competitor's, when neither is particularly good for the environment.

Examples of greenwashing:

- ◆ A vague and non-specific claim such as: "This new and improved product is better for the environment."
- ◆ A symbol displays a rabbit or other environmental image on the product label without a statement providing further explanation.
- ◆ A comparison claim that lacks information, such as: "This product uses less energy."

Once you know how to evaluate a product's claims, it's easy to make choices that are more environmentally friendly. Consider the amount of information about the green claim provided on the product label; choose products with more information over products with less. When in doubt, seek out further information from the manufacturer. To help consumers make informed choices some industries and advertisers are using environmental standards and certification (eco-labels). Learn which eco-labels are backed by good certification standards, such as EcoLogo, Energy Star, Greenguard or UL Environment.

To download a copy of the report, *Environmental Claims: A Guide for Industry and Advertisers*, and learn more about making informed choices about products visit the health unit website's Environment page under Topics at www.simcoemuskokahealth.org.



Got questions about any of the features in Health Matters? Other concerns? Call Your Health Connection at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520 weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. You'll also see related information at www.simcoemuskokahealth.org.

Screen time, cell time, pod time...

How much is too much?

Computers and other technology are a constant part of our lives these days. They support us in learning, working, communicating and playing.

This same technology has also been the subject of criticism. Are children and youth spending too much time on cell phones and computers when they should be exercising (it's now recommended they get at least 60 minutes a day), doing homework or sleeping? What about you as parents? Is computer time robbing you of family time, exercise or sleep?

These issues stress a family and even put some at risk of physical and mental health problems. So, what can a family do?

Where to start?

An important step in fixing any problem in the family is to track how often it happens. Knowing how much family members use technology can help show when things are occurring and how much of a problem it is. Everyone can look together for realistic solutions.

If parents are concerned with what they see in their tally of technology use by children there are steps to help change that pattern. Different things work for each family and for children of different ages.

Set rules and routines

Young children rely on their parents to set routines and help them learn to follow them. Having a regular routine for going to bed is helpful and can include shut-down and storage of technological devices. Children benefit from having rules they understand. They can help set the rules from quite a young age, too.

It's important to point out when children follow the rules, so they know when things are going well. Parents need to set up consequences for rules not being followed and be prepared to follow through, not just threaten.

Encourage self-assessment

As children approach adolescence consider new techniques to create changes in unwanted behaviour. Teens and pre-teens are ready to

learn the skills that will help them assess their own behaviour and manage their own challenges. Parents can help by working together with their teens or preteens to set the rules and consequences.



Encourage with praise

Like younger children, teens need to hear when they are doing things the way parents want them to. For example, if the young person remembers to put away the cell phone on the charger for the night without being reminded, find a way to say "thank you".

Knowing how to manage disagreements between parents and teens or preteens is important too. There are ways to defuse emotional responses from parent and teen, such as:

- ◆ setting aside time to talk about issues together,
- ◆ planning ahead for challenging situations.

If you would like more information about managing screen time, call Your Health Connection to learn more about Triple P – Positive Parenting Program and other programs in your local community.



Eat well to learn and live well

The school years are critical growth years for students.

Having healthy foods available for students can be the boost they need to keep their attention focused and their minds alert. We know that good food is good for health and good health is the foundation for growth and development, learning and ongoing success.



To help students build healthy eating into their school days the Ministry of Education is bringing in a policy requiring healthier food and beverage choices to be sold in all schools.

The policy comes into place when the school year starts this September and applies to any food and drinks sold in schools.

Three basic categories spell out what and how much food can be sold:

- ◆ Sell Most - At least 80 per cent of the food and drink sold must be high in healthy nutrients and low in fat, sugar or sodium (salt).
- ◆ Sell Less - Food and drink with slightly more salt, fat or sugar can make up no more than 20 per cent of what is sold.
- ◆ Not permitted - Anything with few nutrients, tending to be high in fat, sugar or sodium is simply off limits and can't be sold.

This policy offers schools, families and communities an outline for everyday healthy eating. The aim is to prevent serious chronic diseases like heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and certain types of cancer.

Teachers, school staff, parent/school council members, school board administration, and foodservice operators are being trained to assess

school food and beverage choices and to select healthier options to sell to students.

The policy does not apply to the foods students bring from home or buy while off the school property. Food sold at the school for non-school events and food sold in staff rooms are also exempt. Schools will also have exemptions for up to 10 “special event” days when they can offer a wider variety of foods.

This new policy is part of a larger plan by the Ministry of Education to get students and parents, teachers and administrators working with the community to build healthier school environments.

So what can you do as a parent or community member to help make this policy work?

Be Aware

- ◆ Learn more about the policy and nutrition standards at <http://healthy.apandrose.com>.
- ◆ Talk to the principal, teachers and students about what your school is doing to implement the policy.

Be Involved

- ◆ Volunteer to participate on your school's healthy schools committee: if your school does not have one, talk to your principal about starting one.
- ◆ Help with healthy eating programs already under way in the school and community.
- ◆ Research healthier fundraising activities and assist the school and student councils or community groups in offering healthier choices.

Make it easy

- ◆ Pack lunches and snacks with healthier foods from the four food groups of Canada's Food Guide. You can find the guide at www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide.
- ◆ For healthier baked-goods recipes for lunches, snacks, and school community events such as celebrations and bake sales, check out the resource Bake It Up! at www.eatrightontario.ca/en/Resources.aspx.



Rabies

Taking the bite out of a deadly disease

Spring has arrived – children and pets will be outdoors more and wildlife is starting to venture out. It's time to think about the risk of rabies.



Rabies is caused by a virus that moves from an infected animal's saliva to an open cut, sore or wound or to your hands and then to the mucous membranes of the mouth, nose or eyes. It's most often passed along by a bite because animals with rabies are usually highly aggressive.

It can take from a few weeks to many months for rabies to develop in an animal. Although, an animal can transmit rabies before showing signs of illness, it's only once the virus enters the saliva that the rabies virus can be transmitted through a bite. At this stage in the disease the animal will likely die within the next week to 10 days. An animal that has bitten someone is kept in quarantine for 10 days to watch for signs of rabies.

Prevention is key

The good news is that rabies is preventable. The best prevention is to reduce the opportunity for your family or pet to come into contact with a potentially infected animal. And the next step is to make sure your pets are vaccinated against rabies.

Any warm-blooded animal can get rabies but in Canada bats, foxes, raccoons and skunks are the most commonly infected. Dogs, cats and ferrets can get rabies from wild animals but other household pets like hamsters, rabbits and rodents do not commonly pick up the virus. To prevent your pet from getting rabies:

- ◆ Keep household pets away from wild animals.
- ◆ Always keep dogs leashed if going outside and off your property.
- ◆ Take steps to bat-proof your home, eliminating potential exposure for both humans and animals.

Other key rabies prevention tips include:

- ◆ Keep your pet's rabies vaccinations up-to-date – it's the law and can result in fines if not completed.

- ◆ Avoid contact with and feeding of unfamiliar domestic animals and all wild animals, especially when the animal looks sick, acts strangely or is found dead.
- ◆ Teach your children to stay away from unfamiliar animals.

In the event of a bite

The health unit investigates more than 1,100 biting incidents a year. If you or a family member is bitten by any animal, immediately wash the wound well with soap and water, then get medical attention and report the incident to the health unit.

It is the law that anyone who knows of a bite from a suspect rabid animal must report the incident to public health. Include as much information as you can about the animal and if possible, the owner's name, address and phone number. The incident then can be investigated and assessed for rabies risk. An animal that has bitten or is suspected of biting will be quarantined for a period of time to assess whether it has rabies.

If rabies treatment is needed then the doctor will call the health unit; the health unit provides the vaccine to the doctor.



Protect Your Pet

You don't want to lose your best friend

By law, pet owners must have their pets vaccinated against rabies on a regular basis.

Some area veterinarians offer low-cost rabies vaccine clinics at certain points through the year. Talk to your vet, or check local papers for announcements about the clinics.



For information about rabies, visit www.simcoemuskokahealth.org or call Your Health Connection at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520.



HEALTH MATTERS is published several times a year by the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit. Articles may be reproduced in full provided the source is acknowledged. We would be pleased to provide you with additional copies of this publication and further reference material or to discuss future topics with you. Please contact Director of Corporate Service, at 705-721-7520 (1-877-721-7520).