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*Your Health Connection*



# Health MATTERS

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## When heads take a hit

*Hockey superstar Sidney Crosby's concussion has made everyone aware of the dangers of a severe blow to the head.*

Concussions, even with properly fitting helmets, are hard to avoid in high-impact sports. Between 2007 and 2009 there were 7,189 visits to emergency rooms in Simcoe and Muskoka hospitals for all types of head injuries.

Snowboarding, football, rugby and hockey all have high rates of visits to the ER associated with head injury.

### What is a concussion?

You don't have to lose consciousness to have a concussion. It is an injury caused by a direct or indirect hit to the head or body. The jarring can change the way the brain functions. Symptoms include dizziness, blurred vision, nausea, feelings of being off balance, difficulty concentrating, sensitivity to light or sound, headache and sometimes loss of consciousness. Long-term damage can include irritability, memory loss, depression, anxiety and amnesia.

People often recover fully from concussions. But there is a risk of serious and long-lasting symptoms. They must all be treated carefully in consultation with a physician.

### Understanding is the key

Coaches, trainers and parents need to:

- ◆ understand the nature of concussion;
- ◆ recognize the symptoms of a concussion;
- ◆ manage a safe and healthy return to play and learning.

If a young athlete receives a head injury in practice or competition, they should be removed from play at once and checked by a physician as soon as possible. The athlete should avoid physical activities and rest the brain by cutting back on time spent on computers, TV and gaming.

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Once the symptoms have completely passed, the athlete can go through a medically supervised process called "Return to Play and Learn." Returning to activity too soon risks another concussion and a longer recovery. For more information on this process, visit [www.thinkfirst.ca](http://www.thinkfirst.ca).

Protective equipment can reduce the risk and severity of injuries to the face and skull – but there is no concussion-proof helmet. Wear the gear and wear it properly!



### Helmet Safety Tips:

- Always take a helmet out of the box and check the fit before buying.
- Check for the Canadian safety approved stickers: CSA, ASTM, Snell, CPSC, BSI and SAA.
- Check the helmet for extra pads to help with a proper fit.
- Don't buy a used helmet. Replace your helmet after a crash. Replace a helmet that is more than five years old.
- Use a bike helmet only for bikes, and helmets designed for other sports just for those sports.



# Gestational weight gain



*Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit wants to understand the needs of pregnant women, and to help them have a healthy pregnancy. In 2011, a survey of local pregnant women explored their eating habits and level of physical activity. Here's what we found...*

Only 30 per cent of pregnant women surveyed reported eating seven to nine servings of vegetables and fruit in one day, as recommended in Canada's Food Guide. Over half ate fast food once a week or more.

Only one third were getting the recommended 15 to 30 minutes of moderate exercise (slightly out of breath but still able to talk) three to four times a week during pregnancy. More than half reported doing less moderate physical activity since they became pregnant. Twenty-eight per cent reported rarely or never doing moderate exercise.

Fifty-eight percent of pregnant women were gaining more weight each week than recommended by Health Canada. At the time of the survey, 23 per cent had already gained more than their recommended total pregnancy weight gain.

Pregnant women surveyed were more likely to gain weight faster than recommended if:

- ◆ they did not eat seven to nine servings of vegetables and fruit,
- ◆ they reported eating fast food more often than "rarely" or "never."

If you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant, here are some important health messages for you to consider:

- ◆ Aim to eat three meals and two snacks each day.
  - Include a vegetable or fruit at each meal and snack.
  - Enjoy meat, fish, beans, tofu, nuts or seeds at each meal.
- ◆ Drink water often. Limit sugary drinks like pop, iced tea and fruit drinks. Choose 100 per cent fruit juice, only ½ cup (125 mL) each day.
- ◆ Choose lower-fat milk and yogurt more often than cheese. (Canada's Food Guide recommends only two servings of milk and alternatives each day).
- ◆ Eat foods high in sugar and fat less often. (Limit or avoid full fat sour cream, cream cheese, frozen yogurt and ice cream).
- ◆ Eat foods high in salt less often. (Limit or avoid bacon, salami, sausages, wieners and bologna).
- ◆ If eating fast food, try eating child-size meals. Choose the milk and fruit pieces options.
- ◆ Being active during pregnancy has many benefits for you, like more energy, improved mood, better sleep and healthy weight gain.
- ◆ Build physical activity into everyday routines. Try walking short distances instead of driving. Take regular walks....explore local trails with friends or family.
- ◆ Stop exercising and seek medical attention if you have chest pain or trouble breathing, feel faint, have painful contractions of your uterus, or start leaking fluid or blood from your vagina.

Eating well, being active, and gaining a healthy amount of weight are all parts of a healthy pregnancy. Both you and your baby will benefit. Talk to your health care provider about nutrition and exercise in pregnancy. Be sure to ask about the healthy weight gain range for you.

You can talk about healthy eating with a registered dietitian at EatRightOntario. Call 1-877-510-5102 or go to [www.ontario.ca/eatright](http://www.ontario.ca/eatright).



# Dr. Seuss on parenting and mental health

*The mental and emotional health of parents and infants are closely linked. Just like the cat in the hat or green eggs and ham. If you are a new parent, take a moment to consider these classic “Seussisms.”*

**“A person’s a person, no matter how small.”** A strong bond between infants and mothers and fathers is key to early brain development. Breastfeeding, frequent skin-to-skin contact, talking and reading to your baby, making lots of eye contact and providing warm responsive care are important to that parent-child bond. Simplify life whenever possible and focus on parenting your new little person.

**“All alone! Whether you like it or not, alone is something you’ll be quite a lot!”** Mothers often feel isolated after the birth of a child and need help and support from partners, family and friends. Fathers or partners may feel this way too. Lack of sleep makes things more difficult. Find ways to listen to and support each other in your new roles as parents. Mothers must keep in mind that fathers or partners may have their own way of caring for the baby. Get them involved early and give them some slack while mom takes a break and re-energizes.

**“Things may happen and often do to people as brainy and footsy as you.”** Managing stress is key throughout pregnancy and beyond. Expect the unexpected and stay flexible. Some days will be thrilling. At other times, chores may not get done, sleep patterns may be disrupted, and parent sexual relationships may be altered for a time. Take care of yourself: choose healthy foods more often, get some fresh air and regular physical activity when you can, and find ways to rest and sleep when possible. Some regular tasks may just need to be set aside.

**“Be who you are and say what you feel, because those who mind don’t matter, and those who matter don’t mind.”** Take time to talk about your experiences, the treasured moments and the challenges. Share with family members, friends or other parents. One in five mothers will have a postpartum mood disorder and many more experience baby blues. Keep in mind that fathers may have depression or anxiety symptoms too.



Talk to your support persons and health care provider early if you feel exhausted, overly moody or otherwise do not feel yourself. Learn more about how common depression is and the things that can be done to prevent or overcome it.

**“You have brains in your head. You have feet in your shoes. You can steer yourself any direction you choose.”** Learn about community supports for parents. Ask for help for you and your family.

## Community Resources for Parents:

- Your Health Connection: 1-877-721-7520 Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
- Telehealth Ontario: 1-866-797-0000 24-hour health information lines to talk with a registered nurse.
- Ontario Early Years: A place for parents/caregivers and their children 0-6, provides drop in locations for play, programs and information 1-866-821-7770 or look for Ontario Early Years Centres online.
- 211 Ontario: dial 211 for community, health and social services information or visit [www.211ontario.ca](http://www.211ontario.ca).



# Bug bites that bring disease



*With summer around the corner everyone’s eager to enjoy the outdoors. But there are health threats out there that we need to be aware of.*

Vector-borne diseases (VBD), although rare, pose a serious threat to Ontarians and in the most extreme cases can be fatal.

If a disease is “vector-borne,” it means it can be spread to humans or other animals by a vector – typically an insect. For example, viruses can be spread by a mosquito that has fed on an infected bird. In Ontario, the main vectors are mosquitoes and ticks. The most notable VBDs in Ontario are Lyme disease, West Nile virus (WNV), and Eastern Equine Encephalitis virus (EEEV). Reactions vary but can be severe. Anyone in areas where mosquitoes or ticks live is at risk.

## WNV, EEEV, LYME

Insect bites often go undetected and infections can be easily misdiagnosed. The diseases they spread can be hard to prevent and control. Early warning signs can include aches, fever, chills and flu-like symptoms. Symptoms usually appear within two weeks of a bite from an infected mosquito or tick. EEEV has been identified in Ontario in horses and mosquitoes but to date no human cases have been reported.

### PERSONAL PROTECTION:

- Wear light-coloured long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and a hat when outdoors.
- Use insect repellent. Follow the manufacturer’s directions for safe use.
- Make sure door and window frames and screens on your home fit tightly and have no holes.
- Because ticks tend to stay close to the ground, avoid sandals or open shoes when hiking. Wear shoes that cover your entire foot.
- After outdoor activity, check clothing and your entire body for any attached ticks. Visit [simcoemuskokahealth.org](http://simcoemuskokahealth.org) for more information, including how to properly remove a tick.
- Reduce the amount of habitat suitable for ticks and mosquitoes. Keep grass on your property well cut and drain any standing water.

	WNV and EEEV	Lyme (ticks)
<b>Signs and Symptoms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most people infected with WNV or EEEV have no symptoms and do not get sick. Others may experience fever and body aches. Some may develop a mild rash or swollen lymph glands.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usually painless and not itchy, but a circular “bull’s-eye” like rash can appear.</li> <li>• Most likely contact with ticks occurs by brushing against vegetation.</li> </ul>
<b>Possible health effects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals with weaker immune systems are at greater risk of serious health effects, such as meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain or spinal cord) and encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). The most severe cases of WNV or EEEV can cause long-term health effects. EEEV can affect the central nervous system and cause severe complications and even death.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fatalities from Lyme disease are rare, but if untreated, it can lead to long-term health effects including chronic arthritis and neurological problems.</li> </ul>
<b>Treatment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No specific treatment, medication or cure for WNV or EEEV. If you think you have WNV or EEEV visit your health care provider to see if you should be tested.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early treatment with antibiotics is effective in most cases. If you have been bitten by a tick, visit your health care provider to see if you should be tested.</li> </ul>

