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*Your Health Connection*



# Health MATTERS

June 2014

## E-cigarettes

### Vaping clouded with controversy

*E-cigarettes are electronic devices that use a battery to heat a vapor that a user inhales as they would a cigarette.*

Although there is no tobacco in them they have been dubbed e-cigarettes because the first ones produced in 2007 looked exactly like cigarettes. Today their design continues to evolve and many now look like thick pens or tubes.

### How they work

Using e-cigarettes is called vaping. A typical e-cigarette includes an atomizer powered by a battery that heats liquid contained in a cartridge turning it into a vapor that can be inhaled. The liquid in the cartridge is a mixture of propylene glycol or vegetable glycerin, water, flavorings and if desired nicotine. Nicotine is the addictive component of tobacco products.

### What we know/don't know

- ◆ A 2009 Health Canada Advisory has warned that e-cigarettes may pose a health risk and have not been fully evaluated for safety, quality and effectiveness.
- ◆ It is illegal to sell or market e-cigarettes with nicotine yet many outlets ignore this law and it is relatively easy to get nicotine cartridges.
- ◆ Research is still underway to determine if e-cigarettes are an effective tool to help people quit using tobacco products. It is illegal to market e-cigarettes as healthy, or a quitting support.
- ◆ The widespread use of e-cigarettes has the potential to “re-normalize the act of smoking” and undermine gains made in tobacco-free living.
- ◆ A wide range of fruit and candy flavoring is available making e-cigarettes attractive to the youth market. The use of e-cigarettes with nicotine may maintain nicotine dependence in people who smoke or prompt addiction in nonsmokers.

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### To use or not to use?

- ◆ The health community is anxiously awaiting more evidence on the safety, effectiveness as a cessation support, and impact e-cigarettes have on tobacco use uptake and nicotine dependence before making recommendations on their use.
- ◆ Locally some businesses, employers, municipal councils and property owners are banning the use of e-cigarettes indoors in public and workplaces in line with the ban on indoor tobacco use. This not only makes it easier to enforce No Smoking laws but also ensures there is no exposure to the secondhand vapor from these devices.

### Ready to try quitting?

There are many quit smoking support products available that have been tested and approved to support people trying to quit tobacco. These therapies with or without individual, group or phone counseling have been proven to increase a person's chances of quitting. You can find more information to help you quit on the Tobacco pages of the health unit website [www.simcoemuskokahealth.org](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org) You can also find more information on e-cigarettes under the Tobacco Hot Topics section.



# Being cute doesn't mean "pet me"

*Spring is finally here and bears aren't the only creatures coming out of hibernation.*



We are finally getting outside more, and so are wild animals and neighbourhood pets. This is a perfect chance to remind our children – and ourselves – of the dangers of approaching or touching unknown animals, whether they look friendly or not.

## Rabies is still around

Rabies is one of our biggest concerns when it comes to contact with an unknown animal. Rabies is an infectious disease caused by a virus that infects nerves in warm-blooded animals. The rabies virus reaches the brain through the nervous system and is fatal.

Rabies moves from an infected animal through the saliva from:

- ◆ a bite,
- ◆ contact with the virus through an open cut, sore or wound,
- ◆ contact with the virus through mucous membranes (mouth, nose, eyes).

Remind children that you can't tell if an animal is friendly or has rabies so they should always:

- ◆ ask permission before petting any dog or cat,
- ◆ resist touching or playing with ANY wild animal, even squirrels, chipmunks, raccoons, rabbits and bats,
- ◆ tell an adult right away if they ever see a lost, unknown or injured animal, AND/OR

- ◆ if they have ever touched, or have been scratched or bitten by ANY animal.

## No animal bite is safe: get medical attention

All bites and scratches from any animal must be reported. If you or your child are bitten or scratched by any animal, wash the wound well with soap and water and contact your family physician or seek medical attention immediately.

Either you, your doctor or the hospital emergency department, must report the incident to the local health unit. If you are reporting the incident to the health unit, include as much information as you can about the animal and if possible, the owner's name, address and phone number. Public health inspectors will use this information to contact the owner, check rabies certificates and decide what other actions are needed.

Don't let your pets run free. Keep them indoors at night. Keep all your animal's vaccinations current. Not only does it help keep them healthy, it is required by law. Owners are required by law to vaccinate cats, dogs and any animals that are exposed to the public.



# Good news for parents – feeding babies is now a lot less complicated

*Feeding babies can be a complicated matter. It doesn't have to be.*

Health Canada has recently revised the feeding guidelines for infants aged 6 to 24 months. The revisions incorporate the latest scientific evidence on how to feed babies. To cut the confusion—here are the major changes parents should be aware of.

## Introduce a variety of foods and textures from the beginning

While breastfeeding continues, parents are advised to introduce a variety of foods and textures to babies starting at about six months of age.

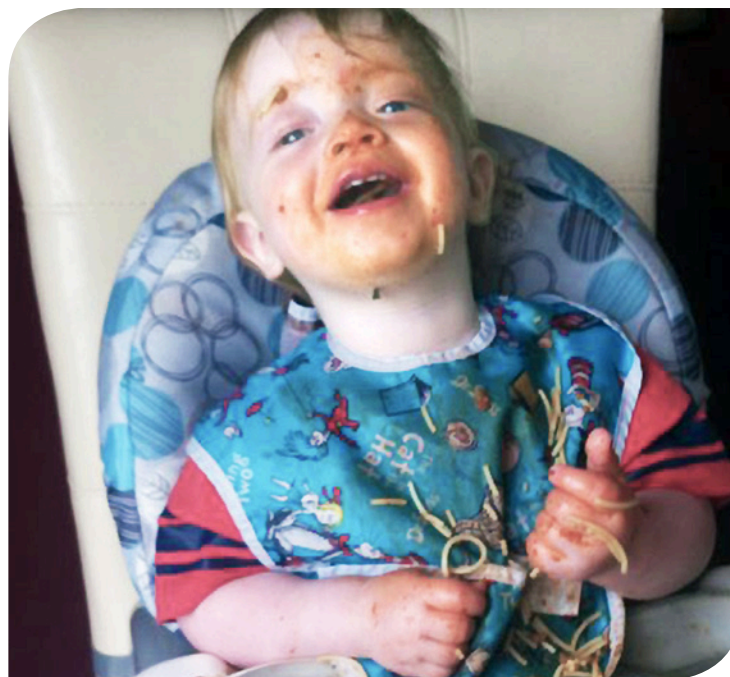
Babies can start eating iron rich foods (i.e. meat and meat alternatives, iron fortified infant cereals) and then all the other food groups can be introduced (including milk products such as cheese and yogurt). The only two exceptions to this are homogenized milk, which is never recommended for a child under nine months and honey (and products made with honey), should be avoided in the first year.

A variety of textures can also be introduced from the beginning (purees, finely minced, lumpy, mashed, finely chopped, or ground). Finger foods are included in this list of acceptable textures and include: pieces of soft-cooked vegetables and fruits; finely minced, ground or mashed cooked meat; grated cheese; and bread crusts or toasts.

## But what about foods that can cause allergies?

New information suggests that delaying potential allergenic foods might *increase* the risk of food allergy. Parents can introduce *all* of the most common allergens as part of first foods offered to babies – including egg, milk, peanuts, seafood, sesame (e.g., in hummus), soy, tree nuts and wheat. If a reaction is to occur when introducing a potentially allergenic food, it will most likely appear within 48 hours.

Parents are encouraged to wait 2 days in between introductions of these foods and serve potential allergenic foods early and often. Families with a history of food allergy are advised to talk to their health care provider about the introduction of allergenic foods to babies.



## Toss the sippy cup

Sippy cups are now being discouraged, and the use of open cups (starting from six months) is now being promoted as sippy cups may delay the development of mature drinking skills. If a child is introduced to an open cup starting at six months of age their drinking skills continue to progress as they grow. Small amounts of water or expressed breastmilk can be initially offered in an open cup.

## More advice is available

Babies don't come with manuals, so this latest update should be welcome news. New parents are encouraged to contact Health Connection with their questions about feeding their infant or toddler.



# Time to close the book

*After 30 years of publishing, Health Matters has reached its retirement age. This is our last issue.*

The first issue of Health Matters was created on typewriters. The cover story was about headphones and the potential for hearing damage, a problem that still persists today. The purpose of the newsletter was—and still is—to provide people with easy-to-read, friendly advice on timely health issues.

The advice will still be available, through a variety of different ways, including the health unit's website and social media platforms.

The agency's Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/simcoe.muskoka](http://www.facebook.com/simcoe.muskoka)) provides regular posts on timely subjects, with links to more details on the topics.

For parents of young children, Play together–Grow together ([www.facebook.com/PlaytogetherGrowtogether](http://www.facebook.com/PlaytogetherGrowtogether)) is a forum to share experiences about raising young children, and where public health nurses and public health nutritionists make their expertise available on family matters.

How Many Drinks (<http://howmanydrinks.org>) is a blog site that explores the cultural aspects of alcohol, with an aim to encourage moderation. Another Facebook page, [www.facebook.com/HowManyDrinks](http://www.facebook.com/HowManyDrinks), promotes the material posted to the blog.

There are many opinions being aired in social media, not all of them based on sound research. So the health unit's Twitter account, @SMDhealthunit, gives us the chance to steer residents to proven, reliable health information.

A second Twitter account, @SMDHUemergency, promotes preparedness for public health emergencies, and is used to quickly send out vital information during emergencies.

For the entire spectrum of public health services in this region, there is still no better place to go than the website [www.simcoemuskokahealth.org](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org). Regular updates provide current news releases, clinic details, alerts about emerging public health risks, advice on healthy lifestyles, food safety, reportable diseases and more. The Parents and Parents-to-Be section of our website offers an A-to-Z list on hundreds of topics.

For students working on school projects, there's also [www.the-phakz.ca](http://www.the-phakz.ca), a website young adults designed for young adults and the issues that confront them.

For people who need current health data, there is the HealthSTATS page at [www.simcoemuskokahealthstats.org](http://www.simcoemuskokahealthstats.org). This site offers a wealth of statistical data shedding light on the factors that have a real impact on people's health.

The old reliable telephone is still there too, for those who prefer it. Health Connection, at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520, has public health nurses specializing in areas of family health, sexual health and communicable disease, and a public health inspector who fields calls about issues like water quality, food service complaints and rabies. You can also reach Health Connection through the Facebook page, the Twitter account @SMDhealthunit, or with an online form on our website.

Even without Health Matters, volumes of information on public health issues are still at your fingertips, thanks to technology. Keep yourself informed, and healthy!

## Health Connection

Free confidential health information and advice at your fingertips

1-877-721-7520 [www.smdhu.org](http://www.smdhu.org)

