



Health **MATTERS**

November 2005

Kids need their dads, dads need their kids

Years ago it was rare to see fathers pushing strollers, carrying diaper bags or dropping children off at day-care and school. Today, fathers are taking a more active role in the lives of their children.

As two-working-parent families become the norm, fathers play a larger role in raising children. There are also a growing number of fathers in the stay-at-home role, acting as the main caregiver.

As a result, more fathers are seeking advice on raising children. More fathers are looking for programs and services to enhance the bond with their children.

Fathers need to know that both family and society value their role. Their positive contributions are essential to the well being of the family and are a vital part of raising children.

Dad and child both win

There is growing evidence that fathers play an important role in the healthy development of their children. A 2002 study at the University of Guelph found that positive father involvement has deeply rewarding benefits for both child and father.

Being a responsible, dedicated dad does many things. Children who feel closer to their father feel better about themselves. They are also able to build trusting relationships with others; are more likely to succeed in school; have fewer behavioural problems; have more opportunities to experience success; and are more ready to learn.

It's a two-way street, as well. There are many rewards for fathers who connect with their children. They will get an increased sense of well being; develop personally; enjoy their lives more, with less stress; have closer relationships generally and will increase their effectiveness as parents.

- ▶ A planning guide for party hosts 2
- ▶ Sexually transmitted diseases 3
- ▶ Planning for a pandemic..... 4

What's a dad to do?

- be involved in child care chores
- play with your child
- read with your child
- talk to your boss to see if you can take your next raise in time, not money
- show love and affection toward your child
- be a role model to your children
- eat together as a family
- volunteer at school
- discipline with love and purpose
- know their friends
- listen to your children
- support, respect, and encourage the mother of your child
- teach your children what you know

Health Canada has established a National Project Fund on Fathering. If you'd like to learn more about this project, go to the Internet and check out www.cfii.ca/fion, or www.mydad.ca.

You can also get information about what's happening in your community for fathers by calling **HEALTH CONNECTION** at (705)721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520, Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.



Planning a party? Do it smartly!

The holiday season is approaching, and with it many parties, alcoholic drinks and lowered inhibitions. You will want to keep your friends and family safe, and safeguard yourself against liability. Here are some simple tips while planning a party.

1 Be an “equal opportunity” host.

Offer all of your guests an assortment of alcohol-free drinks – Mocktails, punch, pop, bottled water, tea, coffee, cider. Serve them with flair in fancy glassware with festive garnishes.

2 Not to kids! Remember, the legal drinking age in Ontario is 19.

Although you can serve your own children a taste in your own home, it is illegal to serve anyone else’s children.

3 Alcohol and ice don’t mix. Wait

to enjoy any alcoholic drinks after the physical activities end. Drinking and sledding, skating or snowboarding... it’s a dangerous ride!

4 Flat’s where it’s at. If you are

serving a spiked punch, choose a non-carbonated base such as fruit juice. The carbonation in sparkling drinks causes the body to absorb alcohol faster.

5 It’s your serve! Your party, your

bar. It’s easier to keep an eye on your guests’ alcohol consumption if you do the serving. If you simply can’t, appoint someone reliable to serve as bartender.

Some guests tend to drink more when they are serving themselves.

6 Food, glorious food! Have plenty of food close at hand so that no one drinks on an empty stomach. Things like nuts, cheese & crackers, nachos or hot party dips are good choices.

7 Happy trails to you. Make sure you know how your guests intend to get home safely – and have a plan in case things change. Do whatever it takes to prevent drinking and driving. Keep cash and taxi numbers on hand and prepare for overnight guests. Consider having a “good host kit” on hand: stuff a pretty bottle bag with basic toiletries like a toothbrush and toothpaste, deodorant, shampoo and hand lotion. You can find all of these items (including the bag) at your local dollar store.

8 Have fun! Alcohol doesn’t have to be the focus of your get-together. Why not plan a games night, or break out the karaoke machine? Use the party as a chance to model the message that it is possible to have fun without alcohol.

Your legal responsibilities

Something to keep in mind: As the host of a party, you have the same legal obligations as the owner and servers at a bar or licensed restaurant. You are responsible for the safety and behaviour of your guests while they are drinking and until they are sober after a party you host.

You can learn more about your liabilities as a party host at the website of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, at www.madd.ca. Look for the document “Being Sued Can Ruin a Good Party” in the research section.



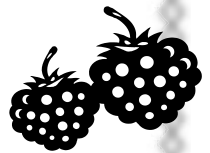
Marvellous Mocktails!

Jack Frost (Serves 1)

4 oz ice tea

4 oz raspberry juice or puree

Pour over crushed ice, and garnish with fresh lemon slice, raspberries.



Evergreen Punch (Makes a punch bowl-full)

2 cans limeade, undiluted

4 cans cold water

2-3 good splashes of lime cordial (non-alcoholic, available at the grocery store)

Ginger ale to fill the punch bowl (1 – 2 bottles)

Garnish with lime wheels



Wild About Wassail (Serves a crowd)

1 gallon+ cranberry juice or cran-apple

2 oranges, 2 lemons, 1 lime - all sliced

Pkg mulling spices (if you can’t find them, improvise – cinnamon sticks, whole cloves, nutmeg)

Fresh cranberries for garnish

In urn or crock pot, combine fruit and juice. Add spices to taste, once juice has begun to warm up. If using whole spices, wrap them in cheese cloth or a large tea strainer. The longer it simmers, the better it tastes!



STIs: not gone but perhaps forgotten

Christina reeled when her doctor told her she was “lucky,” that all she had was chlamydia, a sexually transmitted infection (STI) she had never heard of. A 34-year-old mother of two, she had only been enjoying the singles scene for three years. She was a mature and responsible woman who felt the need to get on with her life. Now she felt shocked and embarrassed.



Christina is a fictional character, but every day, women just like her, as well as men, straight, gay and bisexual, young and older, are given the news that they are “lucky” to have an STI that can be cured or controlled ... or worse: that there is no cure for the STI they have.

STIs are more common than we think

Chlamydia is the most commonly diagnosed STI in Simcoe Muskoka but it's not the only STI in the community these days. In addition to chlamydia there is syphilis, gonorrhea, human papillomavirus (genital warts), genital herpes, hepatitis B, HIV and AIDS. And rates for some of these are on the increase.

Symptoms of STIs vary, but many are not obvious. A person can have an STI with no symptoms, and can carry an infection for years, perhaps passing the infection along to partners all the while. STIs can cause serious health problems, including infertility in women and chronic illness. Some types of genital warts can lead to cervical cancer in women and while HIV can be treated, it can't be cured.

Why aren't people using condoms?

One reason STIs continue to circulate in the community is that many people are not using condoms. According to the Canadian Community Health Survey, of those aged 15-49 in Simcoe Muskoka who had two or more sexual partners in the last year, only 44 per cent used a condom the last time they had sex. Surprisingly, condom use is highest among those 15 to 19 (with two or more sexual partners in the past year), where 69 per cent report using a condom the last time they had sex.

There many reasons why people aren't wearing condoms, including safer sex burnout, riskier sexual behaviour when alcohol and drugs are involved and the mistaken belief that STIs can't be spread through oral sex. The bottom line is that without protection, STIs and HIV/AIDS can happen to anyone.

Stay protected, stay healthy

While condoms are key to taking care of your sexual health, it's important to know the facts about STIs. Education and frank discussion about sexual health among parents, educators, health professionals and young people and adults are important so there is a clear understanding about what the risks are and the need for protection.

If you are starting a sexual relationship with someone new, you should both be tested for STIs — before having sex. Testing for STIs in men and women is quite simple in most cases. Many STIs, including chlamydia, syphilis, gonorrhea and hepatitis B can all be treated. Hepatitis B can be prevented with a vaccine.

There is no cure for HIV/AIDS, but early diagnosis allows people to get the best care and treatment possible. Early diagnosis also helps to prevent the spread of infection to partners and to babies during pregnancy.

STIs and HIV/AIDS can affect anyone, but the risk can be reduced if precautions are taken.

For more information on STIs, testing and treatment, call the health unit at 721-7520, or toll free 1-877-721-7520 and ask for sexual health. Or check www.simcoemuskokahealth.org



What is a pandemic and why is planning important?

A pandemic is an outbreak of disease that affects a large part of the population and takes place over a very wide area involving several countries or continents.

Pandemics that were most likely influenza (flu) have occurred every 10 to 40 years since the 1600s.

In the 20th Century, three influenza pandemics took place—the Spanish flu of 1918, the Asian flu of 1957 and the Hong Kong flu of 1968. The most serious of these pandemics was the 1918 Spanish flu, with an estimated death toll of more than 40-million people worldwide. Many people died within the first few days after infection, and others died of later complications. Nearly half of those who died were young, healthy adults. During that time in Canada, 30,000 to 50,000 flu-related deaths were reported.

To understand more about pandemic flu it is helpful to know how it comes about. Each year, small changes happen to the flu strain. Scientists around the world monitor these changes closely. They use this information each year to prepare the vaccine for the current flu season.

Every 10 to 40 years the flu virus can experience a rapid and dramatic change and create a new or re-emerging strain of influenza—one with the potential to be aggressive. This can happen when a flu virus in animals, like the bird flu, changes in a way that it becomes a strain that can be spread from one person to another. In these situations, because people don't have the immunity to fight a new strain, the disease can spread very fast and make people very sick.

With everything being new it takes a number of months before the scientists can develop and test a brand new vaccine. This means the virus can have enough time to spread widely across the world—and a pandemic occurs.

Recently health officials from around the world have been warning that we are overdue for a pandemic flu strain to appear. They are asking governments to prepare for this event.

In Canada, all levels of government have been addressing these serious concerns and preparing plans to manage a pandemic. This planning is linked at many levels so that responsibilities are clear and communication channels are well established.



In Simcoe County and the District of Muskoka we are moving forward with our local pandemic planning. Working with local health, emergency service, and community service partners, we have and will continue to focus on plans that will meet the needs of our communities. This planning includes links with neighbouring health departments and the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

What can you do now to prepare for a pandemic

- Keep up-to-date with health information.
- Establish good routines to prevent the spread of infection, like handwashing and covering your cough with a tissue or your sleeve.
- If you are sick, stay at home.
- Get your flu shot – you want to be sure you can fight off other types of flu should a pandemic happen.

For more information about pandemic flu visit our website at www.simcoemuskokahealth.org.



printed on
recycled paper

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 Resource Service, at 721-7520 (1-877-721-7520).