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Your Health Connection



# Health MATTERS

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## Caffeine – You and Your Child

*Some studies suggest that high caffeine intake – about three or more cups of coffee per day – may harm babies during pregnancy. There is no solid proof that caffeine is harmful to unborn babies. However, until more is known, women should limit their caffeine intake during pregnancy.*

### What's the limit?

For pregnant or breastfeeding women, Health Canada recommends a maximum of 300mg of caffeine a day – equal to just over two cups of coffee. Keep in mind that many coffee mugs are larger than a true, 237-mL (8-ounce) cup. A single, large or extra-large coffee from the takeout could contain more than the daily limit of caffeine suggested for pregnant women.

### Products containing caffeine

Many beverages (coffee, tea, energy drinks, and soda) and chocolate contain caffeine. Over-the-counter drug products may also contain caffeine. Read product labels and check in the ingredient list. Also, check with your doctor or pharmacist about any of your prescriptions.

Energy drinks have become widely available in the marketplace. Caffeine can be found on energy drink labels listed as Guarana or yerba mate. Energy drinks are not recommended for children. And because of the high caffeine levels and unknown effects the herbs may have on the developing baby, it is important for pregnant women to avoid them.

Some pregnant women may want to drink more caffeine because they're extremely tired. Fatigue during pregnancy is normal. Pregnant women should strive to get more sleep and rest rather than drinking more coffee or tea to stay awake!

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### Caffeine and Your Child

In children and adolescents caffeine can have a potential effect on behaviour. Health Canada recommends limiting daily intake to no more than 2.5 milligrams per kilogram of body weight. This maximum could easily be met by drinking one or two 355-mL cans of cola in a day.

Product	Serving Size	mg(s) of Caffeine (approximate values)
<b>Coffee</b>		
Brewed	237 mL (1 cup)	135
Roasted and ground, percolated	237 mL (1 cup)	118
filter drip	237 mL (1 cup)	179
Instant	237 mL (1 cup)	76-106
<b>Tea</b>		
Green	237 mL (1 cup)	30
Leaf or bag	237 mL (1 cup)	50
<b>Cola Beverages</b>		
Regular	355 mL (1 can)	36-46
Diet	355 mL (1 can)	39-50
<b>Cocoa Products</b>		
Chocolate milk	237 mL (1 cup)	8
1 env. hot-cocoa mix	237 mL (1 cup)	5
Milk chocolate	28 g	7
Dark chocolate	28 g	19
Baking chocolate, unsweetened	28 g	25-58
Chocolate brownies	42 g	10
Chocolate cake	80 g	6
Chocolate mousse	90 g	15
Chocolate pudding	145 g	9

### Caffeine Alternatives

- Water. Make it interesting— add lemon or lime or cucumber slices
- Milk (2%, 1% or skim) or fortified soy beverages (Canada's Food Guide recommends two servings per day for women 19-50 years of age, including pregnant women)
- 100% fruit or vegetable juices
- Hot water with lemon
- Malt beverages
- Hot apple juice
- Hot milk



# TRANSform your diet—Reduce trans fat








*Healthy living including a healthy diet will help reduce your risk for developing chronic diseases such as heart disease, the leading cause of death in Simcoe Muskoka. One way to lower your risk is to reduce the amount of trans fat in your diet.*

## A heart health concern?

Trans fat is a major contributor to heart disease. It is more harmful than saturated fat because it increases the “bad” LDL cholesterol and lowers the “good” HDL cholesterol at the same time. Due to the health risks, a federal Trans Fat Task Force has made broad recommendations to limit trans fat in the Canadian food supply.

## What is trans fat?

Most trans fat is artificially produced to give foods longer shelf life. Trans fat is formed when liquid vegetable oils are hardened to become a solid fat. It is found in food products made with or fried in shortening or in partially hydrogenated vegetable oils such as:

-  hard margarine
-  baked goods like muffins, doughnuts, pastries, steamed buns, pies
-  snack foods including chips, microwave popcorn, cereal bars, pudding cups
-  deep fried foods like chicken nuggets, fish sticks, french fries
-  ready-to-eat and frozen foods – burritos, pizza pockets, egg rolls, meat or vegetable pies, patties or pastries, breakfast sandwiches, waffles, frozen potato products
-  convenience foods such as pie crust, muffin and cake mixes, icing, instant noodles
-  ready-to-bake dough, puff pastry, hot chocolate mix, coffee whitener

## How can you avoid trans fat in foods?

**Read the label** – By law, trans fat must be listed in the Nutrition Facts table on all food packages. Read the ingredient list and avoid

products with words like “partially hydrogenated” or “vegetable oil shortening”.

**Follow the Food Guide** – Canada’s Food Guide emphasizes choosing fresh vegetables and fruit, whole grains, lower-fat milk products, and lean meats and alternatives such as beans, lentils and tofu. These foods have little or no trans fat.

**Choose healthier fats** – Choose oils such as olive oil, peanut oil, canola oil, sunflower oil and soybean oil.

Choose soft-tub style margarines made with non-hydrogenated oils.

**Shop smart** – Cut back on the purchase of fast foods, convenience and processed foods. These are the major sources of trans and saturated fats in your diet.

**Speak out for change** – Ask for healthy foods when you dine out or buy food at the store. Make your health a priority and take time to comment at restaurants or contact food companies.



## What else is being done?

**Schools** – The Education Act now includes nutrition criteria for food and beverages sold in schools. As of September 1, 2008 schools must ensure that all foods, beverages and ingredients used in food preparation are virtually free of trans fat. Up to 10 special-event days can be exempt from this requirement, but only after school principals consult with school councils.

**Food Industry** – In June 2007 the federal government set trans fat standards that food companies and restaurants must meet within two years. During this period, Health Canada is regularly monitoring the Canadian food supply and reporting on trans fat levels in foods. This information will help determine whether trans fat levels in food will need to be regulated in the future.

Whether young or old, you will enjoy better health by transforming your diet and limiting the amount of trans fats in the foods you eat.



# Turning teens on— the good way

*Teenagers face many challenges on their journey through adolescence. It can be a chaotic time for teens and their parents as they attempt to successfully navigate the intense transition from childhood to adulthood.*

Teens typically exercise their independence and distance themselves from parents and other authority figures. It is also a time when young people experiment with many aspects of life – testing how things fit together to define and shape how they think, how they fit into the world, and becoming their “own person.”

Risk-taking is a normal developmental behaviour for adolescents. It can be a positive tool for discovering, developing and securing one’s identity. Healthy risk-taking in adolescence includes:

- learning a new sport or art form
- seeking out new friends
- volunteering in the community
- participating in a student exchange
- getting a part-time job

Unhealthy, negative risk-taking involves activities that are dangerous to the health and safety of teens. This sort of experimentation can have consequences lasting the rest of their lives such as drug and alcohol addiction, sexually transmitted infections or a criminal record.

## Youth Engagement

Youth engagement is the meaningful participation and continual involvement of a young person in an activity with a focus outside of him or herself. Research shows that youth who are engaged in structured activities — extra-curricular school involvements; community service; or organizational work in their church or community—are less likely to indulge in negative risk-taking.

There is also evidence that engaged youth are:

- less depressed
- have higher self-esteem
- are more physically active
- will stay in school and obtain higher grades in school and,
- show greater commitment to their friends, families and communities.



The advantages don’t stop with the teens. Their energy, eagerness and fresh thinking are tremendous resources for the community at large, and can boost the reach and output of any volunteer organization.

School boards recognize the value of engaging youth in their community and now require high school students to log community service hours. There are many volunteer projects in the community that benefit from youth involvement. One example is the Youth Action Alliance overseen by the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit and funded by the Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy.

This group is called article4 and consists of seven peer leaders, 14 to 18 years of age, who work on a part-time basis with the health unit to develop youth friendly, tobacco-free living initiatives. The youth bring a unique and valuable perspective to tobacco-free program work that is essential in assisting public health to develop strategies that resonate with youth. For more information about article4 and how youth can take action to make a difference in their community, visit [www.thephakz.ca](http://www.thephakz.ca) under tobacco and click on “get involved!”

One easy way to find community activities for your teen in Simcoe County is through Community Connection–211. It’s online at [www.211Simcoe.ca](http://www.211Simcoe.ca), or can be reached by phone by dialing 211. In Muskoka, try calling the local library, community centre, hospital or sports associations.



# Why proof of immunization is so critical

*Health units often appeal to families to make sure their immunization records are up to date. This spring, we had a good example of why that is such an important message.*

In April, Ontario had an unusual outbreak of measles. Canada has all but eliminated measles, through ongoing immunization. Any new cases of the disease come from outside our boundaries. The spring outbreak started with word that someone with the disease had visited the Ontario Science Centre. Despite the best efforts to contain its spread, new cases cropped up throughout southern Ontario for months. It wasn't until early July that the province declared the outbreak over.



## Challenges to reduce risk

The outbreak spread to Simcoe and Muskoka in mid-April. There was exposure to measles at a school and during a large sports event, triggering many weeks of follow-up to ensure the disease did not spread and people were protected.

- Student immunization records were used to find which students were at risk of infection because they had not been immunized or because their immunization couldn't be confirmed due to incomplete records.
- In all, the families of 42 children without immunization or with incomplete records were notified that the children had to be excluded from classes until the risk period for getting measles had passed.
- In some cases children missed school for 21 days—the amount of time it takes to assure measles is not present. As a result of related exposure to measles, some students were required to stay out of school for even longer periods of time.
- The health unit tracked school staff, volunteers, coaching staff and virtually all those who attended or participated in the tournament. The health unit also connected with other health units since teams from across the province competed in the tournament.
- Families and other attendees were advised to watch for symptoms of the disease.
- Extra measles immunization clinics were offered to those who needed immunization or boosters, to make sure they or their children were protected against the virus.

## Measles is serious

While most people don't consider measles to be a serious problem, the news caused concern in public health circles. Contrary to popular belief, measles is a serious disease. Sometimes it can cause serious illness with long-lasting side effects. In pregnant women it can harm the unborn baby. In others whose immune systems are compromised it causes death in roughly one in 3,000 cases. It is highly contagious and spreads easily through the air when ill people cough, sneeze or even just talk. People with measles can spread the virus several days before they know they are sick with it.

Keeping immunizations up to date is as important as using a car seat, seat belt or bicycle helmet. They're not just for children either. We all need to make sure we're up to date with our immunization. Immunization is one of the best ways to protect against disease.

And as this year's measles outbreak shows, it's just as important to have proof that you and your family are immunized. With the kids heading back to school, it's a good time to check everyone's records. Remember: disease has no borders, so keep immunization records up to date.

