



# Health MATTERS

September 2005

## Hooked any kids on smoking lately?

*It must be tough for teens to stay smoke free. Not only do they face peer pressure to try it, they are also the direct target of tobacco marketing tactics.*

The tobacco industry needs to continually attract new young smokers to replace their long-term customers—half of whom will die from cancers, heart attacks and strokes as a result of using tobacco products.

Under the Tobacco Control Act (TCA) it is illegal to give, buy or sell tobacco to anyone under 19. Research shows if kids can get through their teen years without smoking, they are highly likely to be smoke free for life. But these kids are being bombarded with messaging designed to make smoking attractive. If they take the bait and decide to smoke, it's easy for them to get cigarettes and other tobacco products.

### The traps are everywhere

Tobacco companies use their multi-million-dollar advertising budgets in many imaginative and subliminal ways to entice youth to smoke. They do everything from paying movie stars to smoke on screen to supporting events and promotions that link smoking with a fun and glamorous lifestyle.

But big tobacco isn't the only culprit. In some cases it's also the people and businesses that supply youth with cigarettes. Too often, kids under 19 are able to buy cigarettes from stores and gas bars that ignore the law and sell cigarettes without asking for and checking proof of age.

A health unit compliance survey for Simcoe County done earlier this year found that, of 420 tobacco retail outlets visited, 22 per cent sold cigarettes to an underage test shopper. A similar survey done in Muskoka recently found that 54 per cent of tobacco retail outlets



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sold to a test shopper. The law has been in place for 10 years. It is completely irresponsible of tobacco retail outlets to continue to sell cigarettes to underage youth.

Anyone – a store or person – caught selling, giving or buying cigarettes for someone under 19 can be charged and fined under the TCA. On a second conviction, a tobacco vendor can be banned from selling cigarettes for six months.

Youth also get cigarettes from older friends, adults (including parents and family members), and even strangers who agree to give or buy them cigarettes as a favour.

The only way to shut off this supply and help teens stay smoke free is for the whole community to make it socially unacceptable to supply tobacco products to anyone under 19. Here's how you can help:

- If you are approached by a young person to buy or give them cigarettes, say no.
- If you are a smoker, you know firsthand how easy it is to start smoking and how difficult it is to quit. Don't give even one cigarette to anyone under age 19.
- Become an active partner in stopping the sale of tobacco to minors. Report stores selling cigarettes to underage kids by calling Health Connection at 721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520, Monday to Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

There is a coalition working to give kids a fighting chance to stay smoke free through their pre-teen and teen years. For more information on Not to Kids, visit their website at [www.ntk.ca](http://www.ntk.ca).



# Exclusive Breastfeeding to Six Months— The Gold Standard

*We have all heard and know that breast is best. Experts around the world, including the Canadian Pediatric Society, recommend exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life for healthy, full-term babies. That means your baby needs no other food or drink, including water for those first six months.*

## Why wait until six months to start solids?

- Babies who receive only breast milk for the first six months grow and develop normally.
- Exclusive breastfeeding for six months gives baby added protection against stomach and intestine infections, which can cause severe illness.
- Exclusive breastfeeding for six months helps mom return to her pre-pregnant weight.
- Exclusive breastfeeding for six months may provide protection against pregnancy. (Ask your health care provider or call the health unit for important information about how this works.)
- There is no evidence to support the idea that babies sleep better if they are given solid foods. Some babies will sleep through the night early, and others will be much older before they sleep for long stretches.
- Some important nutrients in breast milk are not absorbed as well when other foods are added.

## How to Practise Exclusive Breastfeeding:

To be sure you get off to a good start, attend a Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit prenatal breastfeeding class. You will learn how to position baby for breastfeeding, how to make sure he has a good latch, how to know he is getting enough breast milk, and more.

Sometimes crying may be the last sign of hunger, but you can make breastfeeding easier for you and your baby by learning the early signs that your baby is hungry:

- rapid eye movements under the eyelids
- making small sounds
- stretching or increased body movement
- sucking and licking
- putting hands to mouth.

When baby arrives, breastfeed as often as he wants. Relax and enjoy this time with your baby. Try not to use bottles or pacifiers during the first few weeks, because this may confuse him. Give only breast milk for the first six months.

## When is your baby ready for solids?

While you don't want to give a baby solid foods too soon, the time will come, as your baby approaches six months, when he is ready for and needs solids as well as breast milk to support healthy growth and development. Look for these signs that your baby is ready to begin solid foods:

- Baby holds his head up well.
- He opens his mouth wide when he sees a spoonful of food.
- He turns his head away if he does not want what is offered.
- He swallows most of the food, instead of pushing it out with his tongue.

When parents respect a baby's unspoken messages about hunger and fullness, they are helping him to establish a healthy pattern of eating that could last a lifetime. You can continue breastfeeding for up to two years or beyond. Do what feels best for you and your baby. And, if you have questions or concerns get help from a breastfeeding expert!

Contact your health care provider and staff at the health unit's Health Connection phone line to learn more about breastfeeding and local services like The Breastfeeding Place. Or visit the health unit's website at [www.simcoemuskokahealth.org](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org)



**Promote breastfeeding in your community**

As a parent, you do play a vital role in shaping your child's health. You can also have a broader influence by sharing this information with parents-to-be and others in your community. Check out local restaurants, shopping malls and other public spaces in your community to see if they provide places where mothers can comfortably breastfeed. If not, speak out for baby-friendly changes.

*Building a lifetime of good health begins now!*

# Pedestrian Safety

## “There’s A Monkey On My Street”

*Little Monkey, Hannah and her brother Jack are back. The curious trio, who explored safety issues in the popular book *There’s a Monkey In My House*, have returned with a sequel on street safety.*



The sequel is called *There’s a Monkey On My Street*, and it’s part of a safety campaign targeting three to six-year-old children. This time, they have a musical partner in Muskoka-born performer Mary Lambert, who has written songs to complement the messages about safe walking, biking, rollerblading and skateboarding.

The health unit and the school boards have teamed up using the children’s storybook and music to teach children about walking, biking and playing safely. The kit will be going home with every junior and senior kindergarten student in Simcoe and Muskoka, as well to libraries, daycares and Ontario Early Years Centres.

A lot of research has been done into how well young children understand risks. The studies show that children age three to six can begin to learn the skills needed to choose between risks they can manage safely and risks they should avoid. They are still learning though, and parents should not rely on children’s judgment completely.

Parents should continue supervising their young children, and begin teaching them to play an active role in safety.

### Parent Tips for Street Safety

- Teach your child to protect their head by always wearing a bicycle helmet.
- Teach bike safety to your child.
- Young children can begin to learn about safety, but do not always understand or remember safety rules. Children this age still need adults to supervise them carefully.
- Keep your child off the road until at least age 10.
- Teach your child to ride on streets where the speed limit is lower and where there is less traffic.
- Walk with your child and teach him how to cross the street safely.
- If you child is under age nine, make sure he crosses the street with an adult or older responsible child.
- Have your nine-year-old show you that she knows how to cross the street safely. Take walks together. Ask her to point out risks and tell you what she would do.
- To prevent strangulation on play equipment, remove all draw-strings from your child’s clothing and teach your child to take off her bike helmet.

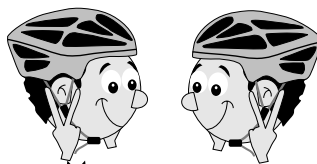
Join in with your child and enjoy *There’s A Monkey* books and songs (in English and French) online at the health unit’s website at [www.simcoemuskokahealth.org](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org), or borrow a copy from your local library.



## Wear it right every time!



**Two fingers above your eyebrow to the bottom of your helmet.**



**Four fingers to make a V-shape around the bottom of your ears.**



**One finger under the strap beneath your chin.**

Know your helmet salute

“Every week in Canada, on average, 80 child pedestrians are involved in a collision with a motor vehicle. At least one of them will die and 10 will have major injuries...”

“...Five to nine-year-olds remain at high risk as pedestrians because their judgment and perceptual skills are still immature, yet they often eagerly cross streets on their own in order to demonstrate some independence.”

# Raw milk— a risky alternative

*Through April this year, the health unit received reports of three people sick with symptoms of food poisoning, including bloody diarrhea and severe abdominal cramps.*

The investigation revealed that all three cases were associated with the drinking of unpasteurized milk and the sickness was caused by *E. coli* 0157:H7.

The link between the illnesses and unpasteurized milk brought to light an old health hazard that has all but been forgotten over time. As with many illnesses that have been successfully beaten, it becomes easy to grow complacent and even unaware that something like drinking unpasteurized, or raw milk might cause disease.

Milk is pasteurized to destroy harmful bacteria found in raw milk. By heating milk for just a few seconds, disease-causing bacteria are killed without significantly changing the quality of the milk itself. A standard pasteurization procedure involves heating the milk to 72°C (161°F) for 16 seconds.

## A long history of illness

Pasteurization is vital, as there are a host of different bacteria and viruses that can be present in cow's, goat's or sheep's milk. These can cause diseases ranging from salmonella poisoning to brucellosis, yersiniosis, listeriosis, campylobacter, "Q fever" and diarrhea caused by *E.coli* 1057:H7.

Farm families from a few generations ago often got sick from raw milk. In fact, it was a major health concern, and pasteurization of milk is marked as one of the cornerstones of public health improvements in Ontario.

In Toronto in the 1910s, Dr. Charles Hastings, the city's medical officer of health, lost his own daughter to typhoid fever from raw milk. He made pasteurization mandatory in the City of Toronto in 1914, but in the rural regions of Ontario, children still suffered from typhoid, tuberculosis and diarrhoeal disease all resulting from drinking contaminated milk. In 1938 the premier, Mitch Hepburn, made pasteurization of milk compulsory across the province.



More recently, the Health Protection and Promotion Act was amended to make it illegal to sell or even give away unpasteurized milk in Ontario. Since then, cases of illness from raw milk have been rare.

## False logic to 'natural' arguments

Unfortunately, a small number of people contend that unpasteurized milk is a natural product and that it is healthier because it is natural. There is a false logic to this reasoning: milk is no less natural because it has been heated for a few seconds to remove deadly bacteria.

If you have ever been led to wonder whether raw milk might be a better choice, the health unit's advice is simple: milk in your grocery and convenience store is always pasteurized. It remains a healthy, safe way of getting vitamin D and calcium into your diet, and milk is an excellent way of providing nutrients for growing young children.



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