

# Health MATTERS

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## A school lunch that won't bounce back

*There's more to a healthy lunch than nutritious foods. It's also a lunch that has been packed safely so your child won't get sick.*

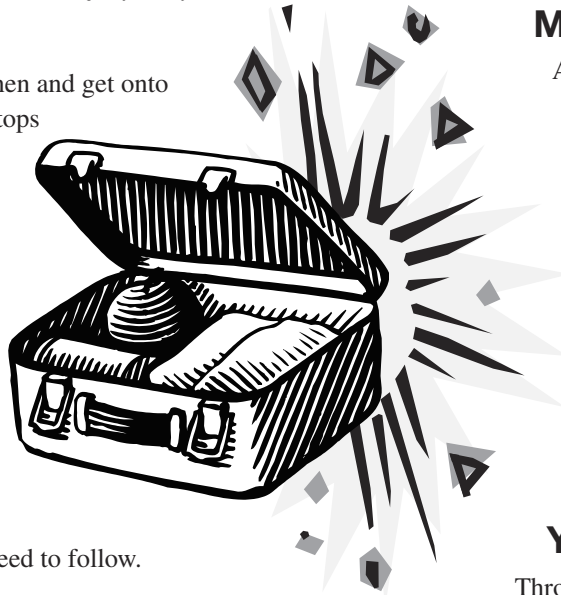
Bacteria can spread throughout the kitchen and get onto hands, cutting boards, utensils, counter tops and food – and lead to food poisoning. The symptoms of food poisoning can be quite severe and include stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Young children, especially those with weakened immune systems, have a greater risk of severe symptoms and for developing serious kidney disease.

Using the right techniques will stop bacteria in their tracks. Following is an example of a nutritious lunch for your child — and the food safety steps you need to follow.

Before preparing food, wash your hands thoroughly with soap and warm water for at least 15 seconds. Be sure all counter surfaces have been washed well and sanitized with a small amount of bleach in water solution (2 ml bleach to 1 litre of water).

### Tuna salad on whole wheat

Make sure the can of tuna is washed or wiped along the outside of the can before opening. Inspect the can for signs of corrosion or rusting. Be sure it isn't bulging or leaking. If a can's contents spurt out when the can is opened, it could be the result of a pressure build-up caused by bacteria releasing gas. Do not even taste it. This advice applies to all food cans in your home. The tuna salad, like other hazardous foods (meats, fish, dairy products, poultry and eggs), must be kept in the fridge.



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### Mini carrots, orange

All fruits and vegetables that are lunch-bag bound need to be washed well. Thick skinned produce can be scrubbed with a brush. Delicate produce like raspberries should be rinsed vigorously under cool running water. Throw away rotten ones, and cut away damaged or bruised areas. Harmful bacteria can thrive in these areas. Clean the knife used for cutting away damaged portions before cutting up the remainder of the fruit or vegetable. Washed mini carrots should be placed in a clean container or disposable bag.

### Yogurt, 100% pure juice box

Throw the juice box in the freezer overnight and it can double as an ice pack as well as a refreshing drink. Pack the lunch, adding the yogurt and banana, in an insulated lunch box. Everything should be well chilled just before leaving for school.

Perishable lunch items packed in an insulated lunch bag with a frozen ice pack should be eaten by lunch time. Hazardous foods that come home at the end of the day—or have been above 4 C for more than two hours—are best discarded.

Remember, you can't see, smell or taste germs that cause food poisoning—when in doubt, throw it out!



# Infection prevention & control in childcare settings

*Should parents be concerned about their children getting sick at their childcare centres? There are many safeguards in place. However, more children get coughs and stomach or intestinal upsets in group childcare settings than children who are cared for individually.*

Children are more prone to infections than adults for several reasons:

- Their immune systems are still developing, so they can't fight infections as well as adults.
- Children usually get a series of vaccinations for various diseases. Depending on their age, they may not have had enough time to complete the entire series.
- Children are just beginning to learn about good hygiene. They don't always cover mouth and nose when they cough or sneeze or wash their hands right after.
- Most children haven't been exposed to many germs. Diseases are spread easily in childcare centres because large numbers of children from different families spend hours together in one place every day.



The laws don't require private home childcare settings to be inspected.

## Your role as a parent

There are some things you should be doing to be sure your child isn't running the risk of getting sick or spreading sickness to other children.

- Make sure all childhood immunizations are up-to-date.
- Teach children to wash their hands after using the washroom, coughing or blowing their nose, before eating, and after contact with animals, soil and toys.
- Regularly clean and disinfect common touch items in the home.
- Pay attention to proper food handling and cooking.

## When your child is ill

- Check the childcare centre's sick policies about use of doctor's notes or how long to keep children at home during illness.
- Take your child out of the childcare centre if they become ill during the day so they don't spread illness to the other children.
- Children with fever, coughing, rash, runny nose, vomiting or diarrhea should stay at home until they are symptom free for a full 24 hours.
- If your child is sick, make sure you let the childcare centre know what the illness is.

## Children in childcare centres are protected by laws

Any place in Ontario that offers child care for more than five children under 10 years old is a "day nursery". Day nurseries fall under the Day Nurseries Act and the Health Protection and Promotion Act.

These laws require day nurseries to be inspected by the local public health unit. Inspectors will guide caregivers in the best ways to manage sanitation. This includes everything from diaper changing routines and handwashing to care of pets and cleaning and disinfecting toys and other objects. The health unit also steps in when an outbreak of any reportable disease, such as mumps, occurs.

They monitor the situation and recommend measures to ensure the risk of illness is minimized.

For more information about childcare infection prevention and control, please call Your Health Connection at 721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520. You can also learn more about infectious diseases and their prevention at [www.simcoemuskokakealth.org](http://www.simcoemuskokakealth.org).



# The three-ringed circus

## Balancing work and life is no easy feat

*It's a familiar scramble. Mornings are a rush to get the family washed, fed and ready with lunches, homework and out the door. Work is packed with deadlines and pressures. The evenings are spent cleaning dishes, doing household chores and chauffeuring children.*

You may ask yourself, what happened to this life? How did it get so hectic?

Research shows that people with work-life overload share many symptoms. They haven't enough time; their energy is low; they feel anxious and guilty about not being able to do it all. They feel no control over their work, and lack satisfaction at work or home. It creates a downward spiral and health can suffer.

### Solution 1: The family-friendly workplace

Workplaces can develop programs and policies to help employees with busy lives find some balance. Such programs include:

- on-site childcare
- employee assistance programs (EAP)
- fitness facilities, or fitness membership financial assistance
- educational opportunities
- policies for family leave, educational leave or self-funded leave
- on-site seminars and workshops on topics like stress or nutrition
- eldercare initiatives such as a referral program to services like eldercare assessment, case management and support groups
- flexible working hours

These ideas aren't just for the employees' benefit. They will reduce absenteeism, improve productivity, reduce costs and staff turnover, and attract highly-skilled people to the workplace.

### Solution 2: The well-adjusted home life

If you can't change a situation, change and control the way you deal with it.

- Enjoy life. Focus on what is going well, not what is stressful. This might require learning new ways to look at things, like how your children behave. Catch the kids being good and you'll both feel better.
- Focus on your well-being. Strive for 30 to 60 minutes of activity per day. Make healthier food choices using *Eating Well with*

*Canada's Food Guide.* Give yourself eight hours to sleep. Give yourself time for spiritual well-being. And take time to relax.

- Spread the workload. Negotiate with your partner to share family tasks. Make lunches the night before.
- Get socially involved. Build a social network. Allow time to have fun and play.
- Reconnect with family. Make time each day to enjoy your partner's company. Turn off the TV and the computer to have family meals and play games together.

### Solution 3: The well-paced work plan

Life isn't perfect, so why should you expect everything you do to be? Often, striving for perfection will push you past your deadlines and add to your workload.

- Keep your expectations realistic. Set realistic timelines. Focus on one task at a time. Learn to say "no" if feeling stretched.
- Clean up your routines. De-clutter. When memos or reports arrive, a) act on it, b) refer it to someone else; c) file it or d) toss it.
- Set your priorities. Take time for breaks and lunch. Leave your work at the office. Review your to-do list with your manager to make sure you're focusing on the right tasks.

### How are you doing?

The Canadian Mental Health Association has a Work-Life Balance quiz you may wish to complete, at [www.cmha.ca](http://www.cmha.ca).

You can also visit the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit's website at [www.simcoemuskokahealth.org](http://www.simcoemuskokahealth.org). In the resource section there are more links to work-life balance.

If you find that stress in the workplace is affecting your family life and would like help, call the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit public health nurses about Triple P — the Positive Parenting Program. Call Health Connection for details at 1-877-721-7520.



# Colorectal cancer: Are your troubles behind you?

*Are you age 50 or older? Is your spouse, parent, or best friend 50 or older?*

You may not have known that people age 50 and older are at risk for developing colorectal cancer. The odds of getting this disease increase with age, and starting at 50, your risk begins an upward climb that will continue for the rest of your life.

Colorectal cancer is very common. In fact, it is the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths in Canada – second only to lung cancer. Symptoms include a change in bowel habits, diarrhea or constipation, blood in the stool, unexplained weight loss, abdominal discomfort and constant tiredness.

Why is this cancer so deadly? It can take up to 10 years before a person shows any symptoms at all. This means that typically the cancer is not caught until it's in the later stages. What we really need is a test that will find colorectal cancer early, before the person has any symptoms. We know that when the cancer is detected early, there is a 90 per cent chance of a cure.

## A test that helps

Wouldn't it be great if there were a test that everyone could take, starting at age 50, that would find the cancer in its early, treatable stages? Ideally, this test would be easy and simple to do, and inexpensive as well. How many lives could be saved if this test was a reality?

In fact, there is such a test. There is a simple, easy way to detect colorectal cancer in the early, treatable stages. It's called the fecal occult blood test, or FOBT. This test detects microscopic amounts of blood in the stool, which may be an early sign of colorectal cancer. You can pick up an FOBT kit from your physician.

The test kit is a small, folded piece of cardboard which opens to show three test windows. After each of three consecutive bowel movements, use the included wooden stick to rub a tiny amount of stool onto one of the test windows. Then, bring the completed test kit back to your physician or laboratory for analysis. That's all there is to it!

If your test is positive, you will be referred for a colonoscopy—examining the lower bowel with a flexible tube and light—to see where the blood is coming from. Often polyps are the culprit; if you have polyps these will be removed during the colonoscopy, as polyps can become cancerous.

Everyone age 50 and older should do the FOBT every one or two years to check for early problems, including polyps as well as actual cancer. At the moment though, not many people are doing the test.

A new push in Ontario may improve the number of people being tested. The Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and Cancer Care Ontario have just introduced a provincial colorectal cancer screening program. Starting this year, there will be increased funding for more colonoscopies. In the second year of the program, FOBT test kits will be made more widely available and people will be able to pick up FOBT kits from pharmacies or order them through Tele-health.

But why wait? If you are 50 or older, talk to your doctor now about having an FOBT.

For more information about the prevention and early detection of cancer, talk to your health care provider or call Your Health Connection.

