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Your Health Connection



Health MATTERS

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Let's get moving!

Children 0–4 years should move more, sit less and avoid screens.



We naturally assume that young children up to four years of age are busy and active. However, the research shows they spend three-quarters of their waking hours or more being inactive.

Most young children are exposed to screen time (TV, video games and computers) too early in life and for too long. This affects both their physical and social development and will have lifelong health impact.

How can parents build more activity in their child's everyday life? For toddlers, exercise is play: they love to play, because it gives them physical contact with their families.

Being active can help young kids:

- ◆ keep a healthy body weight,
- ◆ improve movement skills,
- ◆ increase fitness and heart health,
- ◆ have fun and develop self-confidence,
- ◆ improve learning and attention,
- ◆ develop a lifetime habit of physical activity.

How much play time?

Children under a year should be physically active several times daily; focus on playing on the floor at their level. Children one to four should get at least 180 minutes of physical activity at any intensity, throughout the day.

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Parents and caregivers should limit a child's prolonged sitting to an hour at a time, in a stroller, high chair, or watching a screen. Screen time is not recommended for children under 2 and should be limited to less than an hour a day for ages two to four.

What activity is right for my child's age?

Physical activity should be a daily part of your child's life. Involve both the large and small muscle groups of the body. Be sure that the activity is enjoyable and that your toddler or preschooler can achieve it. Go for a walk, play at the playground, toss or kick a ball around. Have fun and play!

How can I help my child stay active?

Make sure an infant is safe and supervised during tummy time or while they're playing, crawling or reaching for toys.

Being active as a toddler or preschooler means:

- ◆ any activity that gets them moving,
- ◆ climbing stairs and moving around the home,
- ◆ playing outside and exploring their environment,
- ◆ crawling, brisk walking, running or dancing.

The older children get the more energetic play they need, such as hopping, jumping, skipping and bike riding.

Encourage your child and offer a safe and stimulating environment and you'll be laying the groundwork for developing basic movement skills.

The new Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines and Sedentary Behaviour Guidelines for the Early Years, has lots of good advice. Visit www.csep.ca/guidelines.



They're prescription drugs – why the fuss?

Whether you keep your medication on the counter or in the medicine cabinet, there is a chance someone else is interested in your supply.

It may be either to use personally or to sell on the street. By misusing it someone could be at risk of significant harm.

In an effort to deal with the debilitating effects of pain, OxyContin emerged as a positive tool. Its active ingredient is oxycodone, a powerful opiate painkiller. The slow-release effects of OxyContin last for about 12 hours, significantly longer than other painkillers such as Percocet. However, it comes with risks.

When taken as prescribed by a physician, OxyContin can be effective for moderate to severe pain control. When misused in ways that make it work faster, OxyContin tablets can create a powerful 'high'. In addition to being highly addictive, the result of pure oxycodone being released all at once can lead to brain damage or even death.

In a bid to decrease misuse, OxyContin is no longer available for prescription in Canada. It was replaced by OxyNeo in March, 2012. The new drug is designed so the tablets are more resistant to tampering.



Students drawn to opiate drugs

In an Ontario Student Drug Use and Health Survey of Grade 7 to 12 students in 2011, 14 per cent (about 140,100) reported using prescription opiates for other than their intended purpose. Of these students, 67 per cent indicated they got them from home.



Asked why they chose them, students said they are easier to get than illegal drugs; they are free when obtained from home; and they're considered safe, since they were initially prescribed by a doctor.

Any prescription opiate can leave its users struggling with addiction. Withdrawal can be severe. Desperation can lead to home break-ins and theft of prescription drugs. The impact can spill over to seniors and others who have these medications at home, as they become potential crime victims.

Take action, reduce harm

Addiction and its effects can happen to anyone, including members of your family, friends or neighbours. Are you powerless to help reduce this problem? No!

- ◆ Educate yourself about these drugs.
- ◆ Talk to your children, relatives, friends and medical professionals about the dangers of OxyContin and other prescription opiates.
- ◆ Monitor your prescriptions: know how many pills you have, keep them out of sight and locked up, especially when visitors and young children are around.
- ◆ Clean out your expired and unused medications and take them to your pharmacy for free, safe disposal— don't save them "just in case I may need them some day."

You can help people who are struggling with dependence on OxyContin or other prescription opiates. Group support, counseling, local addiction services and drug treatment centres are seldom far from your community.

If you are concerned about OxyContin and other prescription opiate use, ConnexOntario has a toll-free drug and alcohol advice helpline available around the clock. Call 1-800-565-8603.



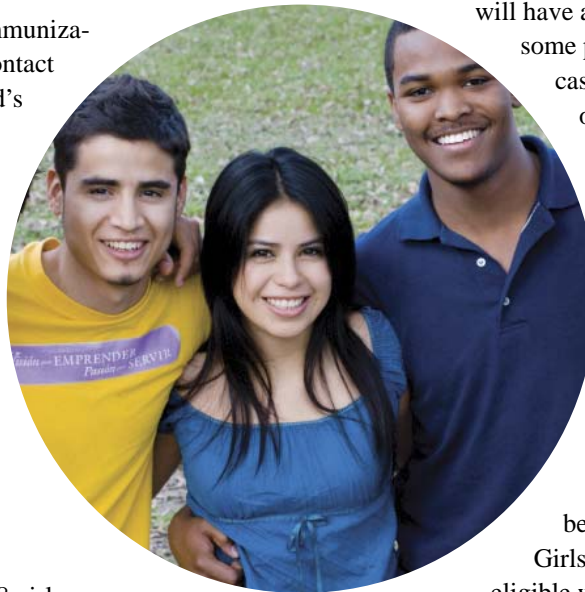
Notebooks, pens, new clothes – vaccines

As we get ready for a new school year, it's important to think about immunizations along with all the other back-to-school tasks.

It is important to ensure that your child's immunizations are up to date—and to remember to contact the health unit so they can update your child's record in their immunization database.

If you are the parent of a student entering Grade 7 or Grade 8 it's the perfect time to talk with them about the importance of immunizations. Students will be offered routine vaccines throughout the school year. The health unit offers vaccines in Grade 7 and 8 for the following diseases:

- ◆ Hepatitis B – to all Grade 7 students.
- ◆ Meningococcal disease – all Grade 7 students.
- ◆ HPV (human papillomavirus) – Grade 8 girls only.



What is hepatitis B?

The hepatitis B virus is spread to others through the blood and other body fluids of an infected person from intimate contact, use of needles and through body/ear piercing or tattooing with dirty equipment. It can cause serious liver disease and liver cancer. There is no cure for hepatitis B, but it can be prevented with the vaccine.

Nurses from the health unit will visit the school in the fall to give the first dose of hepatitis B vaccine and again in the spring to give the second dose.

What is meningococcal disease?

Meningococcal disease is a bacterial infection that can cause meningitis (swelling of the lining of the brain and spinal cord), pneumonia (a lung infection) or septicemia (serious blood infection). It most commonly occurs in children under 5 years and in adolescents. It is spread from the nose and throat by coughing, sneezing, sharing items such as food, lipstick, drinks or other items that have come in contact with the saliva of an infected person.

The vaccine in the Grade 7 Ontario prevention program, called Men-C-ACWY, protects against four strains of meningococcal disease. This meningococcal vaccine is a one-dose vaccine and is offered in the winter.

What is HPV?

HPV is one of the most common sexually transmitted infections. It is estimated that the majority of sexually active Canadians will have a sexually transmitted HPV infection at some point in their lives. HPV causes most cases of cervical cancers. HPV does not only affect females. Other types of cancer such as penile, anal and head and neck cancers are also linked to HPV.

The HPV vaccine is given in three doses. Nurses visit the school in the fall to provide the first dose, followed by a second dose two months later and the third comes four months after that, in the spring.

Grade 8 was chosen because the HPV vaccine is most effective if offered before individuals become sexually active.

Girls born between 1993 (the girls who were eligible when the HPV program began) and 1999 who have not yet received the vaccine can still do so under the “once eligible, always eligible” policy. The vaccine can be accessed through your health care professional or the health unit.

Speak to your son about HPV immunization

While this vaccine is not publicly funded in Ontario for boys, it is recommended for males nine to 26 years of age by the National Advisory Committee on Immunization. Most drug plans cover its cost. Talk to your health care professional about the HPV vaccine for boys.

Discuss the benefits of immunization

Prepare your preteen for school this September by discussing the benefits of immunization with them. Immunization is safe, and remains the most effective means of preventing a disease.



Picking poison ivy – A rash decision

Our long, warm summer is an open invitation for gardening, hiking or walking on nature trails. It can be relaxing and good exercise, but some plants may pose risks along the way.

A noxious weed is a plant that has been deemed harmful or detrimental to humans, animals, livestock or crops. In Ontario, 23 noxious weeds are listed in the Weed Control Act. Although several of these weeds are harmless to people, some plants such as giant hogweed, poison ivy and poison hemlock require special attention. Several noxious weeds look interesting and you could be tempted to include them in your garden.

Getting to know these noxious weeds and what harm they can do will help reduce exposure for yourself and your family.



Giant Hogweed



Poison Ivy

I've been in contact – what now?

If you react to an unknown plant or a weed in the table below, it is important to seek medical attention – especially if the exposed area of the skin becomes infected or severely inflamed. If you have touched giant hogweed, wash the affected area immediately and keep out of the sun. Let your health provider know the plant you were exposed to. If you are unable to identify the plant, describe the land area you had been in to your doctor.

How can I protect myself?

If you are in an area where a noxious plant may exist:

- ◆ “Look, but do not touch!” Some plants can present severe health risks when touched.
- ◆ Wear long pants with socks and shoes when hiking in wooded areas.
- ◆ Do not transplant unknown plants from their natural environment to your seasonal garden.
- ◆ When hiking, remain on trails and look for signs warning of noxious weeds.
- ◆ Many noxious plants can mimic non-hazardous plants; if in doubt, do not touch it.

Where can I find more information?

- ◆ Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs: Ontario Weeds <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/facts/ontweeds/weedgal.htm>
- ◆ Weedinfo.ca <http://www.weedinfo.ca/en/>



Name	Description	Location	Health Risk
Giant Hogweed	Large plant 3 to 20 ft in height, thick hollow stem with dark purple blotches and fine hairs. Leaves large with jagged edges. Flat topped, umbrella-like cluster of white flowers.	Roadsides, stream banks, ditches in moist to wet soil.	Severe burns to exposed skin. Sap of stem and leaves contains chemicals that react with the sun, causing severe burns and blisters to skin. Can cause temporary or permanent blindness and scarring. Reactions can be delayed.
Poison Ivy	Low growing plant with a short stem. Contains three leaflets in each leaf, white to greenish-yellow berries may be observed. “Leaves of three, leave them be!”	Forests, edges of woodlands, fences, roadsides.	Skin irritation. All plant parts contain a poisonous chemical causing inflammation, blisters and itch.
Poison Hemlock	Large plant 4 to 9 ft in height. Smooth stem with purple blotches, no hairs. Fern-like, small bright green leaves. Small, white, clustered flowers on all branches. Not common locally, can resemble giant hogweed.	Found along roadsides and woodlots	Neurological symptoms – confusion, muscle paralysis; ingesting roots and leaves can lead to respiratory failure and death. All parts considered very poisonous, seeds contain higher concentrations of poison – do not consume any part of this plant!

