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Your Health Connection



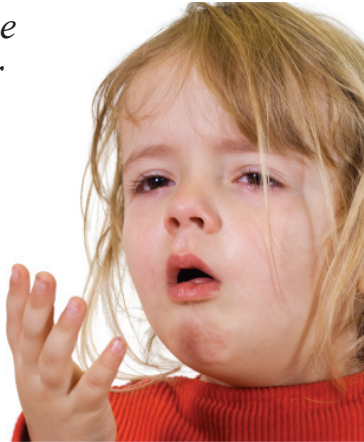
Health MATTERS

November 2011

What is whooping cough?

Cough is the number one reason for family doctor visits in Canada

That’s a good thing because a cough could be a common cold or something more serious, like whooping cough, which needs medical care. Whooping cough, also known as pertussis, is a highly contagious (easy to catch) infection of the lungs and throat.



A cough that keeps getting worse

If you are sick with whooping cough it may start off like a common cold with sneezing, runny nose, mild fever and a slight cough. At this time it can spread easily to others since most people will think it is just a simple cold. Over the next few weeks, when you would expect to start feeling better, your cough will continue to get worse and worse. Eventually you’ll develop severe coughing spells ending with a “whooping” sound (as you try to catch your breath). The severe coughing spells sometimes cause vomiting and some children, especially babies may have blue lips due to a lack of oxygen. Whooping cough can last up to two months if not treated with medication.

Serious consequences for baby

Unfortunately most cases never get diagnosed in adults because they often do not get as sick as young children do. However, adults

- ▶ **Healthy kids are better learners 2**
- ▶ **Bed bugs—the everyman pest..... 3**
- ▶ **Top 10 reasons to handwash 4**

are more likely to spread pertussis to babies, especially when they are kissing their baby.

Whooping cough for babies can be very serious and can lead to further complications such as:

- ◆ Pneumonia
- ◆ Seizures
- ◆ Brain damage.

It can even result in death – one to three deaths occur in Canada each year, primarily in young children.

Easy to prevent

Although pertussis is easy to spread, it is also preventable. The best way to protect yourself and your children against pertussis is through immunization.

The pertussis vaccine is part of a routine childhood vaccine given at 2, 4, 6, and 18 months of age. A booster is given at 4 to 6 years of age and again at 14 to 16 years of age.

In Ontario it is now recommended that adults receive one dose of pertussis vaccine. Pertussis vaccine is given in combination with tetanus and diphtheria vaccine (Tdap). Tdap should replace one of the every-10-year booster doses of Td recommended for all adults.

If you are not sure that your child has received their immunizations for pertussis and other diseases, check your child’s immunization card or ask your family doctor or the health unit.



Got questions about any of the features in Health Matters? Other concerns? Call Your Health Connection at 705-721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520 weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. You’ll also see related information at www.simcoemuskokahealth.org.

Healthy kids are better learners

Next to family, school has the most influence on the lives of children and youth.

Children and youth need good health in order to learn, grow and develop to the fullest. However, for some children reality can get in the way, in the form of poor nutrition, physical inactivity, bullying, stress, poverty, substance misuse and mental health problems.



The ministry of education has made it a priority to improve health in school settings. The ministry's directive calls for health to be central to instruction and programs for students and staff, physical and social environments and through partnerships between schools and the broader community.

Your public health unit is a significant partner with schools in Simcoe County and Muskoka. Public health nurses work with students, families, school staff, administrators and community partners to help create healthier schools. The health unit supports schools in meeting the ministry's directive by encouraging a whole-school approach to promote health and wellness and prevent illness and injury.

As a parent, you are also an important partner in your child's health at school. Here are a few basic ways to make a difference.

- ◆ Lead by example: Eat healthy foods, stay physically active and make sure there's a balance between work and family time.
- ◆ Keep safety uppermost: In school zones, stay smoke-free, turn off the engine when picking up or dropping off students and reduce speed while driving.
- ◆ Be supportive: Talk to your children about the dangers of drug and alcohol misuse, about healthy relationships and bullying.

Want to help make your school healthier?

Here are some tips to help you make a difference in the health of your school:

Learn More – Research the health issues affecting your school community and what your school is doing to address them. Read school newsletters, visit the school website and talk to teachers or principals.

Speak Up – Advocate for change and support your children to speak up on issues affecting their school.

Get Involved – Volunteer, join a committee or start a committee.

Reach Out – Talk to other parents, school staff and community partners about the health issues at your school. Connect with resources and services available in your community.

Two online places to visit

- ◆ www.simcoemuskokahealth.org - The health unit's website has information on a variety of health topics and information to help create a healthy school.
- ◆ Visit the Ministry of Education online at www.edu.gov.on.ca and click on Healthy Schools at the bottom of the page.



Bed bugs—the everyman pest

In recent years, bed bugs have re-emerged to become a nuisance.

Anyone can be affected by bed bugs. They are not necessarily associated with living conditions or cleanliness and can happen to anyone, anywhere. You get bed bugs by coming into contact with them. People who frequently travel can bring them back home. Bed bugs do not spread disease among humans, but their bites can get infected if you scratch them excessively.

Although bed bugs can be very challenging to deal with, control and prevention are possible.

What are bed bugs?

Bed bugs are wingless, oval-shaped insects roughly the size of an apple seed. They live about one year and can go long periods of time without feeding. Infestations can be a challenge to control as a female bed bug can lay as many as 500 eggs in her lifetime.

Bed bugs can enter your home by attaching onto clothing, bags, luggage, or second-hand furniture and electronics. Bed bugs can also crawl from neighboring apartments through cracks in the walls or along pipes or electrical wires.

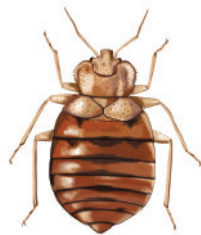
How do I know if I have bed bugs?

You will know by the clues bed bugs will leave in your home. Check your bed sheets for blood spots or streaks from crushed bugs. Inspect your mattress and mattress seams for small rusty or black spots, egg shells, bug skins or live bugs. Bites on exposed areas of the body like the neck, hands, arms and lower legs are also a sign. It is important to verify with a pest control professional that the infestation is indeed bed bugs.

What do I do if I have bed bugs?

If you are a tenant and you suspect you have bed bugs, contact your landlord right away. Your landlord can have a licensed pest control company identify the insect.

For both tenants and homeowners, what you do before treatment is just as important as the treatment itself. To be effective the house has to be carefully prepared for treatment.



- ◆ Vacuum your mattress.
- ◆ Put the vacuum bag in a sealed plastic bag and dispose of it in outdoor garbage.
- ◆ Seal pillows and mattresses with a plastic cover or actual bed bug packaging.
- ◆ Wash all clothes and bedding in hot water and dry on high heat for at least 30 minutes.



- ◆ Place all washed and dried clothes and other personal belongings in clear, sealed plastic bags until treatment is completed.
- ◆ De-clutter your home and place discarded items in sealed plastic bags to be disposed of.
- ◆ Move large furniture and appliances away from the walls. Vacuuming the area may be necessary. Remember, bed bugs can enter from neighbouring apartments, so cracks and holes in walls or along floor boards should be caulked.

More advice is available at www.bedbuginfo.ca.

Preparing for a bed bug treatment can be difficult and time consuming. Seek help from friends, family or other supports to be sure your home is ready for treatment. A second treatment is often necessary.

Knowing that dealing with a bed bug infestation can be beyond the means of some people, the province has provided funding to help. The health unit has teamed up with the United Way of Greater Simcoe County to set up a support program to assist with bed bug treatments for residents of Simcoe and Muskoka.

The top 10 reasons to practise hand hygiene

Germs like bacteria and viruses can easily be picked up by the hands when we touch surfaces, animals and other people. Many of these germs can survive outside the body for hours and sometimes days and still be a threat to human health.



Using soap

- ◆ Use regular liquid soap to wash your hands. Anti-bacterial soaps are not recommended because they destroy good bacteria as well as bad and can add to the problem of germs building resistance to antibiotics.
- ◆ Remove any hand or arm jewellery you are wearing and wet your hands with warm water. Add regular soap and rub your hands together, ensuring you have lathered all surfaces for at least 15 seconds.

10 common ways germs are transferred

- ◆ While preparing food
- ◆ Using the toilet
- ◆ Playing with or petting an animal (including handling leashes and animal toys)
- ◆ Blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- ◆ Caring for someone who is sick
- ◆ Touching frequently handled items in public places such as door knobs, light switches, and toys
- ◆ Changing diapers or helping a child who has used the toilet
- ◆ Touching garbage
- ◆ Handling dirty clothing or equipment and
- ◆ Treating a cut or wound.

The easiest way to prevent germs from spreading to ourselves and others is to practise hand hygiene. Hand hygiene means either handwashing using soap and water or cleaning hands with alcohol-based hand rubs. Although hand hygiene might seem like a simple task, you should follow these steps to thoroughly rid your hands of germs.

- ◆ Wash the front and back of your hands, as well as between your fingers and under your nails.
- ◆ Rinse your hands well under warm running water, using a rubbing motion.
- ◆ Gently pat your hands dry with a paper towel. Drying them vigorously can damage the skin.
- ◆ Turn off the tap using the paper towel so that you do not re-contaminate your hands. When using a public bathroom, use the same paper towel to open the door when you leave.
- ◆ If skin dryness is a problem, use a moisturizing lotion.

Using alcohol-based hand rubs

- ◆ Be sure the hand rub has at least 60% alcohol concentration.
- ◆ Use hand rubs according to the manufacturer's instructions. Make sure your hands are dry, as wet hands will dilute the product.
- ◆ Use enough product to cover all the surfaces of your hands and fingers.
- ◆ Rub your hands together until the product has evaporated. If dry skin is a problem, use a moisturizing lotion.

Practising hand hygiene correctly is the most effective thing you can do to protect yourself against infectious diseases like norovirus (the "stomach flu") and the common cold. Not only will it help keep you healthy, it will help prevent the spread of infectious diseases to others.

