



Health MATTERS

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A Little Job Training for Parents-to-Be

Most people entering parenthood have very little experience or knowledge about this important role.



Many do their best to educate themselves about having a healthy pregnancy and preparing for the birth of their baby, but don't imagine the impact that having a new baby will have on their lives. The reality is that most new parents find life with baby more difficult than they expected.

A sensitive, responsive and warm parent-child relationship is the key to a baby's healthy development. To build this special relationship, parents need to learn how to read a baby's cues and understand what a baby is capable of doing.

Fortunately, expectant parents can get help to increase their knowledge of these and other skills before their baby is born. The Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit is offering Getting Ready for Baby, a series of classes for expectant parents in the last three months of pregnancy. These classes will teach expectant parents about nurturing their baby, keeping their baby safe, feeding their baby, becoming a parent and what life will be like with baby in the first few weeks. There are three classes before baby's arrival and one class afterward.

The Getting Ready for Baby classes are free throughout Simcoe and Muskoka. For more information or to register, call Health Connection at 721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520 or visit the health unit's website at www.simcoemuskokahealth.org. It has information on many different topics of interest to expectant parents. You can e-mail your questions to a public health nurse through the website, too.

Parents-to-be often find it encouraging to know that they are not alone in their concerns about becoming parents. They discover that the connections made in prenatal classes are supportive and lasting.



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There are many resources available to help you prepare for your new, exciting and challenging role as a parent.

- **Health Connection** – The health unit's Health Connection telephone line offers you the opportunity to ask questions of a public health nurse. Call 721-7520 or 1-877-721-7520, weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- **The *Let's Grow a Healthy Baby* book** – for people who are planning a pregnancy and expectant parents, this great book covers many topics including nutrition, baby's growth, the pregnant dad, fitness, techniques for relief from discomfort, hazards to avoid and more. For your free copy, call Health Connection.
- **The *Having a Baby* resource sheet** – When on the phone to Health Connection or when visiting the health unit website, ask about or look for our Having a Baby resource sheet. It's a "one-stop shop" with all the information on the services you need in your local area related to pregnancy and parenting.
- **Healthy Babies, Healthy Children Program** – This program offers support from a public health nurse or family home visitor for parents-to-be and parents with questions after baby has been born. To register, call Health Connection and speak with a public health nurse.



Take a deep breath—of clean air in the home

Wood smoke

Air quality in a home can be severely compromised by a woodstove that is not properly used or maintained. It is important to install a stove and chimney correctly to help reduce the risk of wood smoke back-drafting into the house.

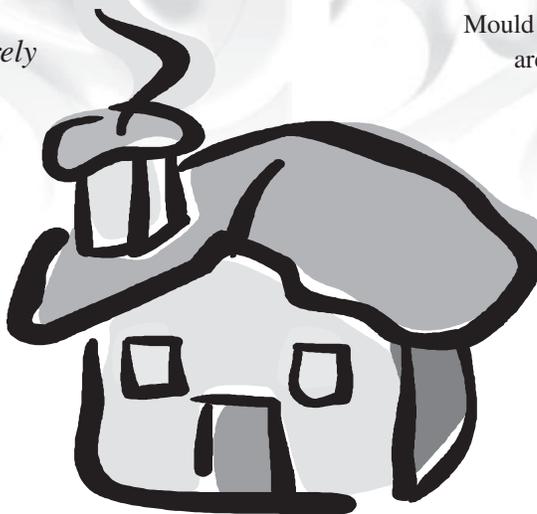
Choose a woodstove that is the proper size for its location and use. A smaller stove generally burns cleaner and uses less fuel. Select a stove that's certified, clean burning and meets Canadian Standards Association (CSA) standards. The same goes for chimneys: design, installation and maintenance all affect the flow of smoke. Once you have a stove, remember to:

- avoid smouldering fires: keep air inlet dampers open to improve burn efficiency, reduce pollution and generate more heat;
- use only dry, seasoned firewood that is split to the right size for your stove;
- reduce your need for wood fuel by making your house more energy efficient (caulking windows and doors);
- never burn garbage, plastic, particleboard, plywood or any other painted or treated wood;
- avoid burning wood when the local municipality has issued a local air quality advisory, since wood smoke contributes to smog.

Moisture and Mould

Some people, such as those with asthma or suppressed immune systems, may be more susceptible to health effects from exposure to mould in the home.

Health effects can range from allergies to runny nose, eye irritation, cough and congestion, aggravation of asthma, headache and fatigue.



Mould can develop when there is too much humidity in areas like showers and basements, or where dampness occurs due to condensation on poorly insulated cold walls. Bacteria and fungi grow in stale water, encrusted humidifier drums and dirty filters in air conditioners. Moisture can also enter your home from many sources: the soil around your house, surface water drainage and damp outdoor air.

A dehumidifier in the basement can help reduce the humidity in your home. There are several types available. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation has helpful information to guide your search for the right dehumidifier for your home. Their website is at www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca.

You can also prevent mould in other ways. Use a fan that is exhausted to the outside in the shower and cooking areas. Clean your humidifiers and air conditioners according to the manufacturer's recommendations. Inspect and insulate walls exposed to external temperatures. Consider an air/heat exchanger for your heating system to control fresh air and humidity levels. Vacuum your heating ducts regularly. Inspect your laundry dryer exhaust to ensure it is venting properly to the outside.

Surfaces with mould should be cleaned using the following:

- washable surfaces – unscented dish washing detergent and water
- wood surfaces – unscented detergent and water
- drywall – use a bit of detergent and water or baking soda water; do not allow the drywall to get too wet

Sponge or scrub surfaces and then rinse with a clean, wet rag or sponge. Rinse washable items with running water and let dry. Be sure to mix a fresh batch for every use.

Under certain circumstances — particularly where there's moderate or extensive mould damage — it may be advisable to have a certified professional clean the areas of mould. If wood is rotten, it should be removed.



Household Cleaners

Many chemicals in household cleaners are hazardous to your health, and if not disposed of properly can also harm the environment.

Label warnings often show that misuse can cause dizziness, weakness, headache, nausea, vomiting, skin and/or eye irritation, asthma attacks or allergic reactions. Rather than run the risk of improperly using these cleaners, you can look for alternatives that are less harmful, to both your health and the environment.

Purchase and use environmentally-friendly products or make your own cleaning product. Some basic household ingredients like baking soda, vinegar, lemon juice, table salt and corn starch can be used to take out stains, clean mould and perform other household cleaning. Baking soda and vinegar followed by boiling water unclogs drains, and vinegar alone makes a superb glass cleaner. These green products are not for disinfecting, so be sure to choose products that provide disinfection when needed.

Smoke-free homes, cars, important to little lungs

Do you permit smoking in your home or car? If so, everyone who shares that air may as well be a smoker, too. That's because the air they breathe contains more than 40 cancer-causing chemicals found in secondhand smoke from tobacco products.



The only way to protect yourself and others from these dangerous chemicals is to make your home and vehicle 100 per cent smoke free. There is no protection from half-way measures. Once released into the air, you can't stop smoke from seeping into little lungs where it can cause asthma, ear infections and more.

At home, thank people for smoking outside. Help make them more comfortable by setting up a chair and umbrella away from doors and windows. When traveling with smokers, agree to stop for cigarette breaks so they can smoke outside, away from others.

And remember, if you smoke and are ready to clear the air you breathe, talk to your doctor or pharmacist about products and services that can help you quit for good.



Wonderful Winter Fresh Air...

Fresh air, snow, ice and outdoor fun are ideal ingredients for an active

lifestyle during the winter months. However, the cold, crisp air and shorter days often drive people away from their favourite outside physical activities in favour of the warmth inside their homes.

Being physically active can still be done outdoors and the activities can be broken down into simple events that require no planning. Enjoy the magic of winter and try these basic, tried-and-true activities during the winter months to get everyone into the fresh air, whether it is light or dark outside:

- ❁ walk briskly, whether it is in your warm snow boots or snowshoes;
- ❁ glide along on cross country skis;
- ❁ skate in your local outdoor rink or a home-made rink in your backyard;
- ❁ toboggan;
- ❁ shovel the driveway with the whole family;
- ❁ build a snow fort with the snow pile created from shovelling;
- ❁ play road hockey or snow tag;
- ❁ and last but not least, make some snow angels.

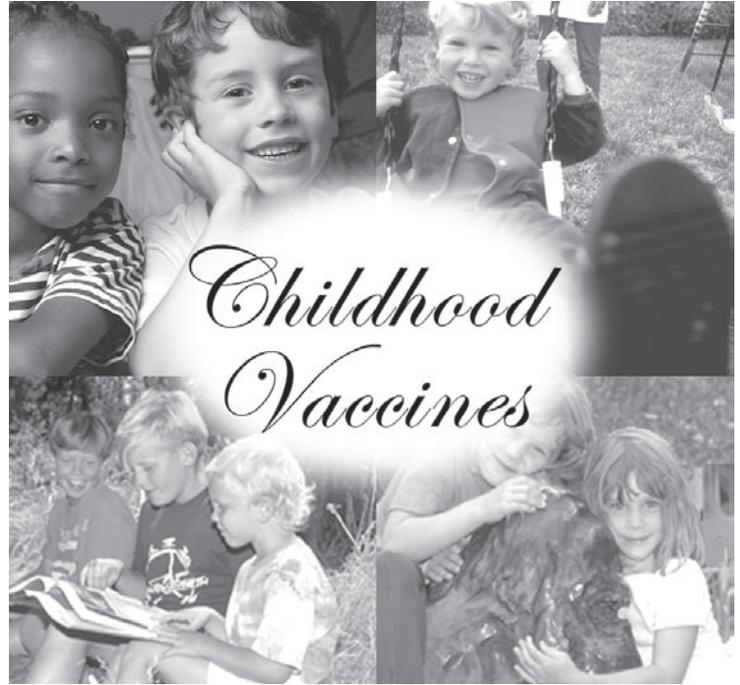
Building these activities into every day will help you and your children develop a love for healthy active living and will help build a lifetime of good health for everyone in the family.



Protecting Young Ones From Childhood Infection

For decades, immunization programs in Canada have protected people from infectious disease. Before immunization, many people were affected by these diseases and left with lifelong side effects — or worse, died.

Proof of the effectiveness of immunization is evident in countries where there have been breakdowns in their immunization programs. For example in 1994, Russia suspended its immunization program and there were 5,000 deaths due to diphtheria. Before that date there had been only a few cases of diphtheria, and no related deaths. In 2000, Ireland's immunization rates dropped and they had an outbreak of more than 1,200 cases of measles, compared to 148 the year before.



Diseases re-examined

By following the recommended childhood immunization schedule, parents can protect their children from serious side effects that can be caused by preventable diseases. The infections that create such harm are always waiting for any chance to come back and can be easily spread.

The health unit urges parents to keep their children's immunization records up-to-date. These records are required, as is following the immunization schedule, a table showing what vaccines your child needs at various ages.

You can find a copy of this schedule on the health unit website at www.simcoemuskokahealth.org under the Health Facts heading.

For more information please call Health Connection at 721-7520 or 1-800-721-7520, and ask for immunization.



Vaccine's Impact

	Facts and Side Effects	Before Vaccine	After Vaccine
Measles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considered one of the most contagious human diseases • Minor – ear infections, diarrhea, croup, pneumonia • Serious and long-term – inflammation of the brain (encephalitis), death 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large outbreaks every 2-3 years • Highest death rate in children less than 12 months and adults • Several hundred deaths per year in Canada • Many cases resulted in brain damage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small number of outbreaks
Polio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be carried without symptoms • Causes nerve damage to muscles that control the spinal cord • May lead to paralyzing of muscles (not able to move body part affected) • does not improve 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most common crippling disease • Children age 5-9 years old were highest affected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Last major epidemic in Canada was in 1958 • Occurrence rate dropped 94% after routine vaccination was introduced
Diphtheria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infects the nose and throat by a bacteria that kills cells in the throat, which may lead to airway blockage • May attack heart, nerves and kidneys • Do not have to have the symptoms to spread 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main cause of death prior to 1900 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very rare
Tetanus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caused by germs that create a poison in the body • Germ can survive in dust and dirt for years • Known as "Lockjaw," interferes in muscle control causing severe, painful muscle tightening • Enters the body through open wounds like scratches or punctures in the skin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large amount of deaths • One of nature's most powerful poisons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only 3-5 cases reported per year • No deaths reported since 1991
Pertussis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Known as "Whooping Cough" • Highly contagious • Damages the lining of nose and throat that normally clear mucous • Coughing spells can cause small areas in the lungs to collapse • Can lead to serious side effects because of coughing spells and build-up of mucus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before 1900 – 5 deaths per 1,000 children in U.S. and Canada • Outbreaks happened every 3-5 years in Canada 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now 1-3 deaths per year
Mumps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swelling of glands around the jaw and cheek • Major cause of viral meningitis that can lead to serious side effects such as deafness, sterility and inflammation of the brain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 1980 affected 1 in 6 children • Most common cause of inflammation of the brain in children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 99% decrease in cases.



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