

# Health **MATTERS**

March 2005



- ▶ Teeth—a lifetime guarantee needs care ..... 2
- ▶ Make activity a priority and reap the benefits ..... 3
- ▶ Are you ready for an emergency? ..... 4

## Tuberculosis still a reality in Simcoe County

*People are always surprised when a case of tuberculosis (TB) is identified in Simcoe County, but TB is not uncommon. In fact, three to five people living here are diagnosed with active TB each year.*

In Canada, about 2,000 new cases of active tuberculosis are diagnosed annually. And just this fall, a cluster of six cases affected a homeless shelter in Toronto.

TB is a bacterial infection that can attack any part of the body, but it usually affects the lungs. The infection is spread through close or regular exposure to someone who has active TB in the lungs or throat.

### Skin test indicator of exposure

Most people don't give tuberculosis much thought until they are asked to take a TB skin test—a common screening tool—as part of employment or school requirements, or at the direction of their health care provider. A positive skin test indicates that a person has been exposed to TB at some time during his or her life. It does not mean that the individual has active TB. In fact, only about one in 10 people who have a positive skin test will ever develop active TB. People who have inactive TB are not infectious and have no symptoms.

If there is no evidence of active TB, a doctor may still suggest that a person take an antibiotic for several months. This antibiotic will kill the inactive TB bacteria in the body and will eliminate the risk of developing active TB in the future.


### Active TB can be treated

Active TB, which includes symptoms of a persistent cough, weight loss (usually dramatic), loss of appetite, fevers, night sweats, and extreme fatigue, can also be treated with antibiotics. Treatment takes at least six months, and medication must be taken until the person is cured or they may become infectious again. A person with active TB is usually no longer infectious after two to three weeks of treatment. Testing for active TB involves a chest x-ray and mucous sample of the lungs.

Public health plays a crucial role in preventing and treating TB in co-operation with community physicians. When an active case is identified, public health will investigate all the close contacts of the person to determine their exposure to the bacteria. Contacts are screened for TB and may be offered preventive medication to keep them from becoming sick. Public health staff will monitor individuals through to the end of their treatment for TB.

### Who is at risk?

People who have lived or travelled extensively in countries where TB is endemic are at higher risk of having come into contact with the bacteria. This is also true for staff and residents of long-term care facilities, hospitals, correctional facilities and homeless shelters. Seniors who lived during the timeframe when TB was common in Canada are also at higher risk.

For more information about tuberculosis call  at 721-7520 (1-877-721-7520 from South Simcoe) Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. and speak with a public health nurse or visit our website at [www.simcoehealth.org](http://www.simcoehealth.org).



# Healthy Teeth

## A lifetime guarantee with regular care

*Long before that first tooth appears in a baby's mouth, usually around six months of age, its development began in the jaw bones. When the first baby tooth appears, it's more than an exciting photo opportunity for families—it's also a reminder that oral hygiene habits need to be the next life lesson.*

### Lend a hand to younger children

Even before teeth appear, using a clean wet facecloth to gently wipe out the mouth before bed will reduce the number of bacteria that can lead to early childhood tooth decay. Once teeth begin to make an appearance in a baby's mouth, a soft baby toothbrush with a small bit (about the size of a match head) of fluoride toothpaste can be used to clean their teeth. Brushing twice a day, especially before bed, will help keep children's teeth cavity-free.

Parents need to help their children brush their teeth for the first few years until their child is able to brush by themselves. That usually happens about the time they can manage the use of a knife and fork at mealtime.

### Get into the 2 for 2 habit



Once in elementary school, children may see the health unit dental team. Dental hygienists and dental health educators screen children for signs of decay, teach them about good oral hygiene and provide preventive treatments. Parents of children with urgent dental problems are notified and can access the Children in Need of Treatment program if financial assistance is necessary.

Grade 2 students may also see the oral health team, along with local dentists and their staff, during Oral Health Month in April when they will be visiting some local schools with the "2 for 2 is What You Do!" message. Grade 2 students will take home a toothbrush, a two-minute timer and other materials to help them learn to brush their teeth twice a day for two minutes each time. The 2 for 2 message is a great way for the whole family to make sure everyone is brushing their teeth as often and long as they should.



### Keep young teeth healthy

**f** Don't let a baby take a bottle of milk or juice to bed. That exposes their baby teeth to sugars for long periods of time. Decay can quickly set in and lead to extensive treatment, including a hospital visit.

**f** Avoid sugary drinks in baby bottles and make the last bottle at night water only. Once a child is one year old, he or she should be encouraged to drink from a cup, not a bottle.

**f** Teething biscuits are usually high in sugar and should be avoided. Try helping your child's teething pains with a chilled teething toy or a cold wet facecloth. Numbing gels should only be used if recommended by your health care provider.

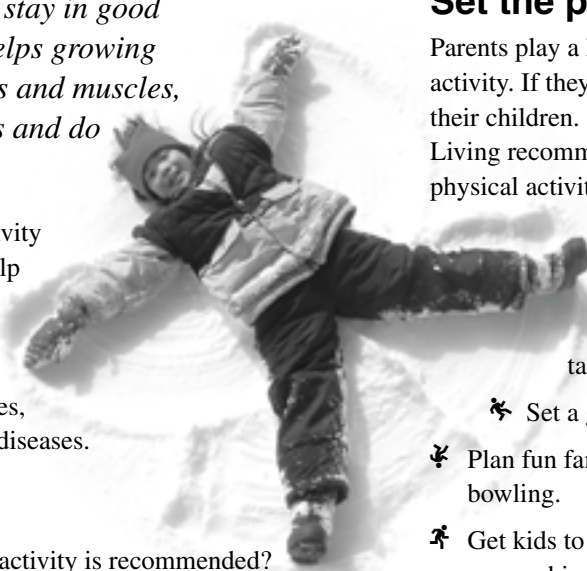
**f** Children are ready to visit the dentist when they are one year old. Going to the dentist early with their family will help them feel comfortable and familiar with the experience.

**f** As your children grow and their food choices broaden, providing healthy snacks from the Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating will help keep their teeth cavity-free.

# Make activity a priority and reap the benefits

*Children must be active to stay in good health. Physical activity helps growing children build strong bones and muscles, feel good about themselves and do well at school.*

Healthy eating and physical activity habits developed early in life help children maintain a healthy weight. Carried into adulthood these behaviours can reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes, heart disease and other chronic diseases.



## Limit “screen time”

So how much and what kind of activity is recommended? Health Canada has created physical activity guides for children ages 6-9, youth ages 10-14 and adults. These guides recommend that young people get at least 90 minutes of physical activity daily, including 30 minutes or more of vigorous activity.

To reach this, children and youth are encouraged to gradually cut down on computer and TV screen time and get active instead. Your kids can begin by increasing their physical activity by a total of 30 minutes. Ontario’s 2004 Chief Medical Officer of Health Report recommends that children’s TV (e.g. cartoons, movies, game shows, music videos, games) and computer time be limited to one hour per day, excluding homework.

## Survey suggests local kids aren’t active enough

Unfortunately Simcoe County children are not meeting these recommendations. According to the results of a recent survey of local Grade 1 students, barely half of the children were found to be physically active for 90 minutes daily, and about 1 in 3 were not even active for 60 minutes a day. Most children did not spend 30 minutes or more daily on activities that were vigorous enough to make them sweat and breathe hard.

Survey results also showed that, on average, children were spending more than an hour a day on TV and computer-related activities. Almost 3 children in 4 watched TV every day, with almost 1 in 7 watching for two hours or more daily.

## Set the pace

Parents play a key role in making sure children get daily physical activity. If they are active themselves, they set a good example for their children. Canada’s Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living recommends adults spend 30 to 60 minutes on moderate physical activity each day. As well as being a role model, there are many other things parents can do.

For example:

- ✦ Talk to kids about being active and its importance to health.
- ✦ Set a good example by being active everyday.
- ✦ Plan fun family activities like hiking, biking, swimming or bowling.
- ✦ Get kids to help with active chores like gardening, vacuuming, car washing or walking the dog.
- ✦ Go for a walk together as often as you can.
- ✦ Teach older children to use a pedometer to monitor their steps.
- ✦ Set up a family activity challenge – who walks the most steps in a week?
- ✦ Consider organizing a neighbourhood activity like ball hockey.
- ✦ Move family TVs and computers to a less visible spot.
- ✦ Choose one or more days during the week as “screen free” days.
- ✦ Avoid putting a TV or computer in a child’s bedroom.
- ✦ Make physical activity a priority - along with homework and family chores - that gets done before screens are turned on.
- ✦ Check out the health unit website regularly to find out about upcoming local programs that promote physical activity such as Simcoe County on the Move, SummerActive, and Unplug and PLAY.

## Speak up for change

Speak up for more physical activity programs in schools and throughout your community. Community organizations, businesses, schools, health professionals, workplaces and families all have roles to play to help children and families make physical activity a bigger part of their day—every day.



# What will you do when an emergency strikes?

*A severe snow storm, an ice storm or a lengthy power outage are examples of emergencies that can happen unexpectedly. Your community has an emergency plan to respond to these situations, but do you? Take the first steps by talking with your family and making a plan together. Expecting the unexpected and being prepared for anything are good beginnings to a plan of action.*

## Make a survival kit

To get started, plan the contents of your survival kit. Keep in mind the special needs anyone in your family may have, including medications. Pack the kit and store it in an easy-to-find spot. Here is a list of items to include:

- ⊕ cash (remember that ATM's may not be working)
- ⊕ important papers (copies of identification for everyone, health cards, personal documents)
- ⊕ flashlights
- ⊕ a battery-operated or crank radio
- ⊕ spare batteries
- ⊕ first-aid supplies
- ⊕ candles and waterproof matches or lighter
- ⊕ personal hygiene supplies
- ⊕ blankets and sleeping bags
- ⊕ one change of clothes per person
- ⊕ three day supply of non-perishable food (e.g. canned vegetables, fruit, meat and fish, crackers, peanut butter, jam, instant coffee) Replace the food in your kit once a year to ensure it is safe to eat.
- ⊕ a three-day supply of unopened bottled water (at least 1 litre, per person/per day) Most manufacturers indicate a two-year shelf life
- ⊕ cutlery including can opener

- ⊕ pet food and supplies
- ⊕ phone numbers (i.e. designated family members out of your immediate area).

## Keep key numbers handy

Post emergency telephone numbers and addresses near the phone. In the event of an emergency, use the phone only if it's critical. Lines should be kept for emergency officials and those who need help.

## Listen to weather warnings

Environment Canada monitors weather conditions 24 hours a day. It issues weather watches, advisories and warnings through national, regional and local radio and television stations. Make sure you listen or watch local or regional stations for weather conditions during the winter.

⊕ A Weather Watch alerts you that conditions are favourable for the development of severe weather. Watch the skies and listen for updated watches and possibly weather warnings.

⊕ A Weather Advisory means actual or expected weather conditions may cause general inconvenience or concern, but do not pose a serious enough threat to warrant a weather warning. An advisory may also be used when conditions show signs of becoming favourable for severe weather when the situation is not definite enough or too far in the future to justify a warning.

⊕ A Weather Warning alerts you that severe weather is occurring or that hazardous weather is highly probable. Severe thunderstorm or tornado warnings may be issued less than one hour in advance. Other weather warnings may be issued six to twelve hours in advance.

You can find out ahead of time from your municipality the location of emergency shelters and if there are any designated emergency routes. In case you or other family members get separated, pick someone who lives outside your immediate area who will act as a central point of contact for your family members. Ensure all family members have the phone number and know to call. You should also have a pre-determined meeting place away from your home in case your home is affected by an emergency situation and family members get separated.

## When you're told to evacuate

During an evacuation, residents are asked to go to a community centre or to the next town. Listen to the radio for evacuation orders and trust the authorities. If an order is given, follow all directions and go quickly to the specified location. Remember to bring your survival kit with you. Don't forget to include arrangements for pets, since they are not permitted in shelters and many hotels.

Expecting the unexpected will give you and your family peace of mind and the ability to remain calm if a disaster does occur. More information is available by visiting the following websites:

Emergency Management Ontario  
[www.mpss.jus.gov.on.ca](http://www.mpss.jus.gov.on.ca)

Canadian Centre for Emergency Preparedness  
[www.ccep.ca](http://www.ccep.ca)



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