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Pediatric Nutrition Guidelines (Birth to Six Years) for Health Professionals & Support for Patients with Perinatal Mental Health Conditions

Attention: Hospitals, Indigenous Health Care and Communities, Midwives, Municipality, Ontario Health Central, Ontario Health Teams, Physicians/Nurse Practitioners/Walk-In Clinics

Date: October 16, 2025

Alert #1: Pediatric Nutrition Guidelines (Birth to Six Years) for Health Professionals

REVISED GUIDELINE:

[The Ontario Dietitians in Public Health](#) (ODPH) published revised [2025 Pediatric Nutrition Guidelines \(Birth to Six Years\) for Health Professionals](#) (available in English and French).

KEY HIGHLIGHTS ABOUT THE GUIDELINE:

- The guideline outlines credible, evidence-based guidelines and potential nutrition risks (red flags) for feeding healthy, full-term infants and children up to six years.
- The revised version offers more extensive recommendations in the following areas:
 - Introducing common food allergens
 - Promotion of breastfeeding
 - Food textures and baby-led weaning
 - Responsive feeding and fostering a positive relationship with food
 - Vegan and vegetarian eating, including plant-based beverages
 - Challenges related to food insecurity
- The guideline provides information on the following topics:
 - Expressed breastmilk
 - Infant formula
 - Growth monitoring
 - Vitamin D and iron
 - Fish consumption and methylmercury
 - Food allergies
 - Choking prevention

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- Family mealtimes
- Vegetarian and vegan eating
- Resources for parents
- The guideline is a complementary resource and is not intended to be a substitute or replacement of Health Canada's Nutrition for Healthy Term Infants 0-24 months.
- The guideline has been reviewed by Physicians, Registered Nurses, Lactation Consultants and Registered Dietitians in both public health and clinical practice.

ACCESS TO CARE AND SUPPORTS:

- For more information on breastfeeding, infant feeding, and early childhood health, please visit SMDHU's [Health Professionals Resources](#) webpage.
- For child developmental screens, visit SMDHU's [website](#).
- For general healthy eating information for parents and caregivers, visit SMDHU's [website](#).
- Further investigation, including possible referral to a registered dietitian (RD) for nutrition assessment and ongoing follow-up, may be warranted for infants and children who do not meet guidelines or present with red flags.
- Parents and caregivers can visit [Health811](#) or call 811 to speak with a Registered Dietitian for free. See [here](#) to find a Registered Dietitian locally.
- Parents can find local breastfeeding supports by visiting SMDHU's [website](#).
- If you are interested in learning more, or would like to work with us, please contact us [here](#).

Alert #2: Support for Patients with Perinatal Mental Health Conditions

NEW TREATMENT GUIDELINE:

[The Canadian Network for Mood and Anxiety Treatments](#) (CANMAT) published the new [2024 Guidelines For Perinatal Mood, Anxiety and Related Disorders](#).

KEY HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE GUIDELINE:

- Many individuals with symptoms of perinatal mood, anxiety and related disorders (PMADs) may benefit from treatment, even when they do not meet diagnostic criteria for a mental disorder.
- The guideline covers 10 clinical sections for health care providers to use with clients for assessment and treatment recommendations in a question-and-answer format that maps onto the patient care journey.
- An accompanying [Patient and Family Guide](#) is available.
- Although the first year postpartum is considered a cut-off point in the literature for diagnosis, many PMADs continue beyond this period. Therefore, the guideline may still be applicable especially when considering issues of lactation and interventions that focus on parenting and/or the maternal-child dyad.

ACCESS TO CARE AND SUPPORTS:

- For more information on Perinatal Mental Health conditions please visit SMDHU's [Health Professionals Resources](#) webpage.

- Health Care Providers caring for pregnant or postpartum clients with a mental health concern can call or text [Ask Masi](#) to ask questions and receive recommendations and/or resources as needed.
- For Health Care Providers who are supporting individuals during the perinatal period including those struggling with perinatal mental health challenges, such as anxiety and/or depression, resources and support can be accessed through visiting [The Women and Children's Health Network Care Pathway](#).
- For general information and supports available for Perinatal Mental Health Conditions, please visit SMDHU's [website](#).
- For families with concerns about the social-emotional development of their child, see the Simcoe County Infant and Early Mental Health [care pathway](#) (ages 0-3.8). Families eligible for the SMDHU Healthy Babies and Healthy Children Program can complete screening and assessments to determine the best developmental screening and support plans for families.

BACKGROUND:

- Perinatal mood and anxiety disorders refer to a variety of mental health conditions that can emerge during and after pregnancy.
- Research shows that 1 in 5 women and 1 in 10 men may experience depression or anxiety in the perinatal period.
- In 2022-2024, individuals in Simcoe Muskoka experienced higher rates of any mental health concern during pregnancy compared to Ontario (HealthStats). The prevalence has increased over time.
- More individuals who have previously given birth in the Simcoe Muskoka area report a history of post-partum depression compared to Ontario in data from 2022-2024.
- In 2022-2024, younger maternal age groups (15-24 and 25-34 yrs) were associated with higher prevalence of anxiety during pregnancy; the youngest maternal age group (15-24) was associated with higher prevalence of depression during pregnancy; the prevalence decreases with increasing age.
- If left untreated or undertreated, perinatal mood, anxiety and related disorders (PMADs) can negatively impact the well-being and quality of life of the affected person, and the health and development of their children and families. See the [Ontario Early Adversity and Resilience Framework](#) for more information on the impacts of early life experiences on lifelong health.