

SPRING 2010

HealthUnit
Haldimand-Norfolk

HEALTHY SCHOOLS

We appreciate your feedback from the 2009 Healthy Schools Newsletter Survey. As a result, a shorter version of the newsletter with seasonal articles will be distributed biannually.

Ontario's Early Learning Program

An exciting new program is rolling out in Ontario, including Haldimand and Norfolk. Starting in September 2010, the Early Learning Program (ELP) will provide a full day of learning to four and five-year-olds. Six schools in Haldimand and Norfolk will offer the ELP in September and all schools will offer it by 2015. The ELP is full day every day kindergarten and is still play-based learning. Parents may have the option of enrolling their child in the school's fee-based, extended day program that provides before and after school programming (for example, 7 - 9 a.m. and 3:30 - 6 p.m.).

The Early Learning Program is an investment in Ontario's children and our future by helping children reach their full potential, build a stronger school system and a well-educated workforce that can excel in the fast-paced, quickly changing global economy.

The ELP is a new program and plans are still being developed. The Haldimand & Norfolk Best Start Network will continue to communicate with you through this newsletter and at other opportunities. You can also find information at www.edu.gov.on.ca/earlylearning.

Schools chosen for the first year include:

- Langton Public School
- Sacred Heart School, Langton
- St. Michael's School, Dunnville
- Dunnville Central Public School
- Caledonia Centennial Public School
- Elgin Ave. Public School, Simcoe

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Important Immunization Information for Parents	2
Bicycle Safety	3
Handwashing 101	3
Play it Safe in the Sun	4



Important Immunization Information for Parents

Under the Immunization of School Pupils Act, 1982, and Day Nurseries Act, 1984, children must be immunized (vaccinated) for entry into day care or school. This law applies to all students in Ontario under age 18 who attend private or public primary and secondary schools.

In Ontario, unless legally exempt, pupils are required to be immunized against diphtheria, tetanus, polio, measles, mumps and rubella (German measles). These are six serious childhood diseases that can be prevented by vaccines. Other vaccines that are not required but are recommended include varicella (chickenpox), pneumococcal, hepatitis B, meningococcal, Human Papillomavirus (HPV) and influenza. All of these vaccines are publicly funded; this means they are available at no cost to parents through either a family doctor or the health unit, depending on whether or not the vaccine is given under a school immunization program. For example, students in grade seven are eligible to receive Hepatitis B and meningococcal vaccines. Grade eight girls are also eligible to receive HPV vaccine. Public Health nurses provide these vaccines to students at clinics held in the schools.

A student may be exempt from receiving the required vaccines in two instances:

1. Medical exemption (must be signed by your family doctor).
2. Statement of conscience or religious belief (must be signed by a designated person).

Both of these forms are available through the health unit.


Immunization is very important in disease prevention. Parents who are considering exemptions should talk to their family doctor about the benefits of receiving vaccines versus the risk of getting the

Immunization Record

Name _____

Date of Birth _____
(yy/mm/dd)

Ontario Health Card Number _____


Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

diseases.

The health unit needs to have a copy of each student's immunization record on file. Parents can ask their family doctor for a list of the vaccines their child has received

through them, including the dates the vaccine was received. You may already have the information on the yellow immunization record. Doctors are not required to call the health unit when they administer vaccines so it is up to parents to update the health unit.

There is a great benefit to having updated immunization records at the health unit. If your family doctor retires or you move to another jurisdiction you just call the health unit and the updated record can be mailed to you.

Contact the Vaccine Preventable Disease team if you have any questions.

Submitted by: Maria Mendes Wood RN, BScN



Bicycle Safety

Bicycle riding is fun, healthy and a great way to spend a sunny afternoon. But it is important to remember that a bicycle is not a toy; it's a vehicle. Research at The Hospital for Sick Children and University of Toronto has shown that provinces which have adopted mandatory bicycle helmet legislation, have had a significant reduction in the number of bicycle-related head injuries in children. In five provinces in Canada, including Ontario, it is mandatory for children under the age of 18 to wear a helmet. The fine under the Highway Traffic Act: 104 (2.1) for failure to wear a proper helmet on a bicycle is \$60.00 plus court costs and an administration fee for a total of \$75.00

Head injuries have devastating results and sometimes even minor head injuries have long-term consequences. Head injuries are the number one cause of serious injury and death to kids on wheels. The good news is that a correctly worn helmet cuts the risk of serious head or brain injury by as much as 88 percent. It is estimated that 75 percent of bicycle related fatalities among children could be prevented with a bicycle helmet.

As professionals and as a community, we want to do everything we can to protect our children. "A National Child Injury Prevention Campaign" which takes place annually by Safe Kids Canada, will be happening May 31 to June 5, 2010 and this year's theme for Safety Week is, "Got Wheels...Get a Helmet". To do our part to support helmet use, the Child Injury Prevention Program, from the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit, will be running several events in Haldimand and Norfolk Counties to support Safe Kids Canada National Safety Week and will be giving children the opportunity to win bicycle helmets.

Bike injuries can happen anywhere, anytime. Stay Alert!

Submitted by: Karin Marks, Injury Prevention Health Promoter



Handwashing 101

I can hear it now.. "Yeah... another article on hand washing. Enough already, that's all we heard during the Pandemic!"

True, we have gone through a media blitz over the last year on how important hand washing is to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. In fact, it is THE most important thing you can do to prevent spreading illness. Now that I have said that, I want to let you know that proper hand hygiene is important anywhere, even in your own home. The following two studies show how important hand washing is in the home setting to prevent the spread of illness.

First of all, researchers targeted homes where infants had recently received their polio vaccinations. The baby would normally shed a weakened state of the virus in their stools for a short time after receiving the immunization.

Swabs were taken in the kitchens, living rooms and bathrooms of these homes and it was found that 13 percent of surfaces in these rooms tested positive for the polio virus. Washing hands after chang-

ing diapers, using the washrooms etc., can contain the spread of this as well as other viruses.

A second study (both published in the American Journal of Infection Control), focused on households where a family member had been diagnosed with a common food borne illness called "Salmonella".

Three weeks after the person had been diagnosed, swabs were taken of the toilet bowl and they were found to still be positive for the bacteria. This means that it can survive quite well outside the body and the person with the illness can still pass the bacteria (and illness) on, even after the symptoms have disappeared.

Whether its liquid soap and warm water, or waterless hand rub, it is important to practice proper hand hygiene in all settings.

Submitted by Leslee Wison, Public Health Inspector



Play It Safe in the Sun

Parents play a vital role in the development of sun safe habits in their kids. By teaching your children about sun safety while they are young, you will be protecting them from harmful effects such as sunburns now and reducing their risk of developing cataracts and skin cancer in the future.

Encourage your children to be active and continue to enjoy outdoor activities, but follow these simple steps to ensure your kids are not over-exposed to the sun's harmful rays.

- Take extra care between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. when the sun's rays are at their strongest, or any time of the day when the UV Index is three or more. If your child is outside during recess

or lunch hour, encourage him or her to play in the shade.

- Always apply sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher to your kids at least 20 minutes before they go outside.
- Send your kids to school or to play in clothing that will protect exposed skin, including a long-sleeved shirt, sunglasses and a wide-brimmed hat.
- Choose play areas that offer shade, such as trees or large umbrellas.
- Be sure your child stays hydrated while out in the sun.
- If your kids are playing in or near water make sure the sunscreen you use is waterproof, and reapply it often. Also make sure they have dry clothing

after playing in water as wet clothing can lose up to half of its UV protection.

- Sunscreen is not just for hot and sunny days! UV rays can get through clouds, fog and haze. Water, sand, concrete and especially snow, can reflect and even increase the sun's burning rays.
- Set a good example. As parents and caregivers you too should follow these tips to protect your own skin.

Enjoy playing outdoors with your kids, learn how to protect your entire family and develop sun safety habits that can last a lifetime. Limit the sun, not the fun!

Submitted by Josh Daley, Health Promoter