

# Physicians' Newsletter

November 2010 | Issue 2

## Dear Colleagues,

Much discussion has been held in recent months among local public health units, the Ministry of Health and Long Term-Care, and the Ontario Agency for Health Promotion and Protection around the collection of personal health information by public health.

Isolated complaints originating in Toronto and Ottawa have thrust this issue into the limelight. Concern stems from the collection of health card numbers at flu clinics run by public health and the loss of an unencrypted USB key containing health information of tens of thousands of residents of Durham Region.

I would like to inform you about situations in which Niagara Region Public Health may be asking your patients for their health card numbers, and to explain the rationale for these requests, the patient's right to refuse this request, and safeguards we have in place to prevent a privacy breach.

It has been argued that, since public health does not bill OHIP for services, we should not need to collect the health card number. However, name and date of birth are not always sufficient to correctly identify an individual for the purposes of accurate medical record-keeping and communication between health care entities such as lab, hospital and physician office. Many women change their name after marriage, while many people in the community, especially in certain religious groups, have both the same first and last names. Addition of birth date alone to a name does not always permit unique identification. The electoral rolls of the State of New Jersey, for example, have 287 Robert Jones all with the same date of birth, including birth year. Combine this with people who use their middle name sometimes, who are called by different names by estranged parents, and who change their spelling just for fun - and we have a record-keeping nightmare.

As part of the efficiencies inherent in our mass immunization software, we will again be swiping the Ontario Health card and/or drivers license at our flu clinics. Clients will always have the option of not presenting either card, and services will still be provided. This right is prominently displayed on posters outside the clinics. Swiping the cards eliminates transcription errors and enables us to be much more efficient. At the same time, collecting the various pieces of personal health information gives us real time knowledge of vaccine uptake by postal code, gender and age group, so that we can target messaging and service delivery as needed.

This year, as in previous years, we will be requesting health card numbers at our sexual health clinics. This enables us to access laboratory services, including pap test reading. Women who do not have a health card, or prefer not to show it, will still be able to access all of our services here.

All Niagara Region Public Health computers, including mobile devices such as USB keys, are encrypted with Sophos and there are strict policies and training practices around privacy issues. Personal health information is never transported on USB keys.

I hope this will help if you get any queries from your patients as to why public health is collecting personal health information, and that it will reassure everyone of the safeguards we have in place. Should you any further questions regarding our privacy policy please feel free to contact Diane Vanecko at 905-688-8248 ext. 7317.

Valerie Jaeger, MD, PhD, CCFP  
Acting Associate Medical Officer of Health

## Adacel® for Teens

In order for your teenage patients to complete their childhood immunization series, they require a booster dose of tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (Adacel® vaccine).

- **We need your assistance**, as we currently have over 7,000 incomplete immunization records on file for secondary students in the Niagara region. The majority of these incomplete records result from students not having received Adacel® or because the teenager has received the vaccine, but this information has not been reported to Public Health.
- Please ensure your teenage patients have received this vaccine. **In order to avoid possible school suspension** in the coming year, this information then needs to be reported to Public Health. Those students for whom we do not have an up-to-date immunization record on file (or a legal exemption document) will face suspension.
- Adacel® is publicly funded (free of charge) in Ontario until a person turns 20 years old, at which time the vaccine can be still be received, but at a cost.
- It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to report this information to Public Health, using ONE of the following:  
**INTERNET:** [www.niagararegion.ca](http://www.niagararegion.ca)  
**TELEPHONE (Immunization Report Line):** 905-688-8248 or 1-888-505-6074 ext. 7459  
**FAX (a copy of your child's Immunization Record):** 905-688-8225
- Niagara Region Public Health offers free immunization clinics held throughout the year, as well as special 'catch-up' immunization clinics held in late August (before school starts) specifically for children and teenagers. To obtain a copy of the End of Summer 'Catch-up' Immunization Clinic schedule visit **[www.niagararegion.ca](http://www.niagararegion.ca)**.

Submitted by: Kelly Wilson, B.A. (Honours), M.A  
Health Promoter, Vaccine Preventable Disease Program

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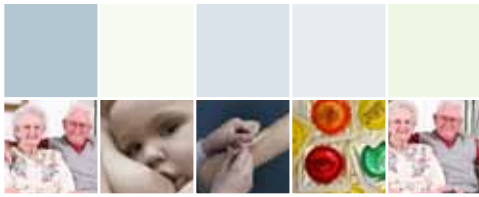
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A copy of this newsletter is also available at [www.niagararegion.ca/living/health\\_wellness/professionals/doctors.aspx](http://www.niagararegion.ca/living/health_wellness/professionals/doctors.aspx)

Location: 2201 St. David's Road, Campbell East, Thorold, ON  
Mailing Address: P.O. Box 1052, Station Main, Thorold, ON L2V 0A2

Tel: 905-688-3762  
Fax: 905-682-3901  
Email: [robin.williams@niagararegion.ca](mailto:robin.williams@niagararegion.ca)  
Editor: Diane Sutherland



## Healthy Smiles Ontario Comes to Niagara

### What is Healthy Smiles Ontario?

In October 2010 the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care launched a new no-cost dental program in Niagara, which will help ensure that eligible children and youth can establish and maintain good oral health. The World Health Organization states that oral health is an integral and essential part of general health and a determinant factor for quality of life (2009).

Accessing dental care for children and youth can be a challenge for some Ontario families,

particularly for those families without dental insurance. Roughly 35% of Niagara Region residents are without dental insurance (Canadian Community Health Survey, 2010). The new Healthy Smiles Ontario program will ensure that children and youth can have regular visits with a dentist or registered dental hygienist. This program is anticipated to benefit about 10,000 children in Niagara.

### Who is eligible?

Children and youth, 17 years and under may be eligible if:

- They are residents of Ontario;
- They are members of a household with an Adjusted Family Net Income of \$20,000 per year or below; and
- They do not have access to any form of dental insurance (including other government-funded programs, like Ontario Works).

### What services are covered?

The program covers regular visits to a licensed dental care provider, such as a dentist or

registered dental hygienist and provides access to services like check-ups, cleanings, fillings, x-rays, scaling and more.

### How do patients enroll?

Patients can call the public health Dental Program at 905-688-8248 or 1-888-505-6074 ext. 7399 to see if their child(ren) are eligible. The dental staff will also assist them with the application process, which involves completing a form and showing required documentation.

The Healthy Smiles Ontario program is part of the province's Poverty Reduction Strategy to reduce the number of children living in poverty by 25% over the five years, and supports the five-year Open Ontario Plan to provide more access to health care services. For more information on this program please call ServiceOntario INFOLine tollfree at 1-866-532-3161 (TTY toll free at 1-800-387-5559), or visit [www.ontario.ca/healthysmiles](http://www.ontario.ca/healthysmiles)

*Submitted by: Tara Wincott, B.A. (Honours) Health Promoter, Dental Program*

## Healthy smiles Ontario

### Childhood Immunization Promotional Materials/Resources

The Vaccine Preventable Disease Program has a wide variety of childhood immunization promotional materials/resources that we can supply to your office free of charge. These resources will help to raise awareness of the importance of immunization among parents of young children. As well, at a time when many parents are using the Internet to obtain vaccination information, it is also a time to encourage parents to access credible websites.

As a health professional who provides services to new (and expectant) parents, you have significant influence over whether parents decide to immunize their children. You are also ideally placed to remind parents that it is their responsibility to report their child's immunizations to Public Health each and every time their child is vaccinated.

Please call 905-688-8248 or 1-888-505-6074 ext. 7425 to request a sample package of our childhood immunization promotional materials/resources. Included in the package will be

an order form which you can complete and fax back to us.

If you are also interested in adult immunization promotional materials/resources for your office, please let us know when you call. We can then include a sample of these resources in your package as well.

*Submitted by: Kelly Wilson, Health Promoter, Vaccine Preventable Disease Program*

### IMMUNIZATION

#### Your Child's Best Protection





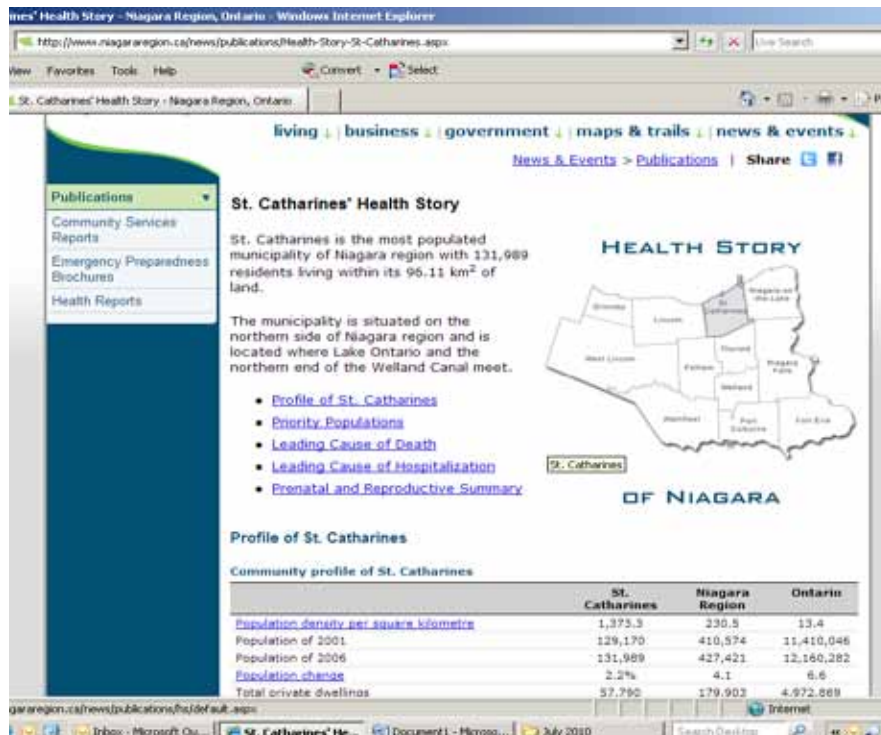
## Health Story of Niagara



Health Story of Niagara Home Page:

We are committed to keeping you informed about the Niagara community and sharing information on Niagara's unique health attributes and experiences. The Health Story of Niagara website is designed to feature health information on local municipalities, as well as data and updates on various theme areas:

- Determinants of Health
- Early Years/Children
- Sexual Health
- Mental Health
- Chronic Disease/Healthy Behaviours
- Injuries
- Infectious Diseases
- Environmental Health



Municipal Profile Page - St. Catharines

The data contained within the website is updated as new information becomes available from a variety of sources such as Canadian Community Health Survey, Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System, Canadian Census, Infectious Diseases Database, and more.

Sign up for email updates at [www.niagararegion.ca](http://www.niagararegion.ca) (search 'health story of Niagara') or bookmark for regular use: <http://www.niagararegion.ca/news/publications/hs/default.aspx>.

These screen shots demonstrate a sample of the information contained throughout the Health Story of Niagara website.



## Seniors and Medical Driving Assessment



Seniors are the fastest growing segment of the driving population and it is projected that by 2040 there will be almost double the number of older drivers in Canada. Many seniors consider driving to be vital to their independence, yet older driver mortality and morbidity is on the rise. We know that:

- The leading cause of accidental deaths for persons 65 to 75 years old in Canada today is driving-related.
- Compared to other age groups, drivers over age 70 have the highest motor vehicle crash rate per mile driven. Crashes are often due to health related conditions that affect driving.
- In Niagara, motor vehicle collisions are the second leading cause of preventable injury (following falls) for those aged 60 and over .

As physicians, you have a vital role in assessing your patients' ability to continue driving, a legal responsibility to report drivers with medical conditions that may jeopardize their driving, and the delicate task of balancing the interest of your patient with the welfare of the community.

Resources are available to assist you in this challenging role.

- Information and forms for reporting patients who are unfit to drive due to medical reasons – see: <http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/dandv/driver/medical-review/physicians.shtml>
- Specific answers for patients and physicians about medical review questions-see: <http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/dandv/driver/medical-review/faq.shtml#evaluations>
- Information about the "National Medical Standards" – see: <http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/dandv/driver/medical-review/committees.shtml#national-stds>
- Reporting Drivers With Dementia; A Guide for Physicians – see: [http://www.regional.niagara.on.ca/living/health\\_wellness/professionals/default.aspx](http://www.regional.niagara.on.ca/living/health_wellness/professionals/default.aspx)
- Determining Medical Fitness to Drive – A Guide for Physicians; see "resources" at: [www.cms.ca](http://www.cms.ca)
- Canadian Driving Research Initiative for Vehicular Safety in the Elderly (Candrive); driving research for older adults: <http://www.candrive.ca/en/about-candrive.html>
- Resources for the older driver in Niagara (including driver assessment centres) – see: [http://www.niagararegion.ca/living/health\\_wellness/professionals/pdf/resources-for-older-drivers.pdf](http://www.niagararegion.ca/living/health_wellness/professionals/pdf/resources-for-older-drivers.pdf)

Submitted by: Linda Beyer  
Health Promoter,

*National Blueprint for Injury Prevention in Older Drivers; Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists, 2009  
National Blueprint for Injury Prevention in Older Drivers; Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists, 2009  
Candrive Cohort Study of Older Drivers; <http://www.candrive.ca/en/component/content/article/42.html>  
The Health Story Of Niagara; Niagara Region Public Health, 2009*

## Ontario's Tobacco Control Strategy

The Tobacco Strategy Advisory Group (TSAG) just released, 'Building on Our Gains, Taking Action Now: Ontario's Tobacco Control Strategy for 2011 – 2016. This report was forwarded to the Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport (MHPS) and will assist in future tobacco control programs. Tobacco's toll costs the province of Ontario \$1.6 billion dollars in direct health care costs. Every year, more than 13,000 people in Ontario die because of tobacco use.

After enjoying years of declining tobacco rates, Niagara and Ontario's tobacco rates have stayed stagnant over the past 5 years. There is a real need to reevaluate tobacco control programs and determine methods in the development of evidence based programs. The main goal of this report and tobacco control programs is to reduce smoking rates over the next 5 years and beyond. The main recommendations by TSAG focus on 4 main issues:

- 1) Reducing the amount of contraband tobacco and cheap cigarettes. There is a need to better control the supply of tobacco;
- 2) Enhancement of the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and creating more smoke-free areas;
- 3) Introduction of plain packaged cigarettes; and
- 4) Implementation of tobacco vendor licenses.

Ensuring that a comprehensive tobacco control framework is in place is critical in reducing the leading cause of preventable death and disease in Ontario.

Submitted by: David Lorenzo  
Manager, Tobacco Use Prevention