

## Personal Health Check-List

Niagara is a great place to live, work and play!

Your board of health is committed to maximizing the health of all Niagara residents and you can also contribute to your well being by adopting healthy lifestyle behaviours.

**How many lifestyle behaviours do you already have? Are there any others you would like to work on?**

### Chronic Disease and Healthy Behaviour

- Know your body and report any changes to your doctor or dentist.
- Be informed – know your risks for chronic disease: age, family history and lifestyle.
- Avoid using tanning beds.
- Make regular visits to the dentist.
- Brush and floss your teeth regularly.
- Be tobacco free and avoid second-hand smoke.
- Drink responsibly.
- Eat 5-10 servings of vegetables and fruit a day.
- Choose high fibre, lower fat foods.
- Boost your calcium (1000-1500 mg/day) and vitamin D intake (200 IU/day for 50+).
- Participate in moderate activity at least 30 minutes or more during most days of the week.
- Achieve and maintain a healthy weight.
- Choose weight bearing activities such as stair climbing and resistance activities such as weight training.
- Have a flu shot every year. If you are sick, stay home.
- Before traveling, get informed and protected from infections that are common in your destination spot. Talk to your doctor or visit a travel health clinic.
- Know the signs and symptoms of a heart attack and stroke.
- Check your skin regularly for any abnormalities (e.g., moles & birth marks that change colour, size or surface).
- Have a regular check-up and discuss the need for screening tests: weight assessment (e.g., body mass index and waist measurement), blood tests (e.g., cholesterol and blood sugar), blood pressure and bone density.
- Get the recommended screening tests:
  - For women, know the screening guidelines for breast, cervical and colorectal cancer, as well as participating in regular Pap smear tests.
  - For men, know the screening guidelines for colorectal cancer and talk to your doctor about your risk of prostate cancer.

### Injuries

- Be active now to prevent falls later.
- At home and at work, follow health and safety instructions when using hazardous materials.
- Protect your head, wear a helmet.
- Always wear a seatbelt and use proper child restraints.
- Don't drink and drive, speed, or drive while distracted.
- Never use drugs and drive.



## Early Years/Children

- If you are childbearing age (18-45 years), take folic acid.
- If you are a parent, speak with your physician about your child's development.
- Breastfeed your children exclusively for the first 6 months and continue after the introduction of solid foods, and up to 24 months if possible.
- Keep your child's vaccination record up to date.
- Visit an Ontario Early Years Centre.
- Hug your children.
- Listen to a child, encourage him or her.
- Read to your children/grandchildren.
- Play and be active with children in your care.
- Eat meals together as much as possible.

## Sexual Health

- Be able to express your feelings and concerns to your partner.
- Protect yourself against sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancy by using a condom.
- Get tested for sexually transmitted infections if you are sexually active or if you have used or now use injection drugs.
- Avoid mixing alcohol or drugs with sexual activities.

## Infectious Diseases

- Stay up to date with your immunizations.
- Clean your home regularly with standard household cleaners that don't have antibacterial agents like triclosan.
- Follow personal protective measures to prevent the spread of illness.
- Cover cuts and abrasions with a bandage.
- Clean your hands often with soap and water or 60-90% alcohol based hand rubs (if your hands are not visibly soiled).
- Cover your cough! Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve if you do not have a tissue.
- Handle food safely. Clean, separate, cook and chill.

## Environmental

- Recycle print cartridges, old devices and anything you can.
- Take a walk through your neighbourhood park.
- Make sure you visit a parlour that practices safe body art if you decide to get a tattoo, body-piercing or permanent cosmetics.
- Ensure you use insect repellent if mosquitoes or other insects are around.
- Check Niagara's Beach Monitoring site for unsafe waters before you go to the beach.



## Mental Wellness/Resilience

(adapted: Canadian Mental Health Association's *Fact Sheet on Mental Health for Life*)

- Build a healthy self-esteem.
- Accept compliments and give them as well.
- Make time and create positive parenting and family relationships.
- Make friends who count and nurture healthy relationships.
- Figure out your priorities.
- Get involved in your community (e.g., volunteer).
- Take steps to manage your stress effectively.
- Learn to cope with changes that affect you.
- Identify your feelings, causes of those feelings and deal with them.
- Get to know who you really are and trust yourself.
- Talk about your mental well-being with friends, family, and health care providers.

**Social determinants of health** are usually broad-based influences that affect our lives and tend to be out of our individual control. We can however learn to cope and adapt to these influences by enhancing our *life skills* or what Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) calls *essential skills*. Examples of life skills include being able to budget (e.g., paying bills one time and saving) and organizing tasks within a set of priorities.

Assess your life skills at [www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/essential\\_skills/general.shtml](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/essential_skills/general.shtml).