

Public Health Matters

A Newsletter for Health Care Professionals

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Message from the Medical Officer of Health

Dear Colleagues

As many of you know, I assumed the role of Acting Medical Officer of Health for the Timiskaming Health Unit at the beginning of 2017 following Dr. Spruyt's move to Algoma Public Health.

I am pleased to share with you our spring edition of *Public Health Matters*. Relevant to your practice, we are sharing information on a variety of topics.

Sincerely,

Dr. Alex Hukowich, Medical Officer of Health (A)

Infectious Diseases: Health Care Provider Reminders

Gonorrhea treatment: the treatment of Gonorrhea is monitored by public health and reported annually to the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care. Refer to these [Guidelines for Testing and Treatment of Gonorrhea in Ontario](#).

Reportable diseases: remember to collect samples for any suspect reportable diseases like Mumps and to report suspect and/or confirmed cases to public health. You can find the test directory here: <http://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/ServicesAndTools/LaboratoryServices/Pages/Index.aspx>

Click here for the [List of Reportable Diseases](#) and the [Reportable Disease Notification Form](#).

Reporting Adverse Events Following Immunization (AEFI)

This [Do your part!](#) factsheet provides a quick reference to the types of AEFI to report, why, where and how. Health care providers are required by law to report Adverse Events Following Immunization to their local public health unit using the Ontario [AEFI Reporting Form](#). Completed forms can be faxed to the THU's secure fax at 705.647.5779.

Read more about vaccine safety trends in Ontario [here](#).

Read more about Hepatitis C in Canada [here](#).

Hepatitis C Screening: New Canadian Guidelines

New guidelines from the *Canadian Task Force on Preventative Health Care* recommend **against** HCV screening in asymptomatic adults who are not at elevated risk. Health care providers are reminded to test persons with risk factors and/or when there is clinical suspicion to suggest HCV infection. Chronic HCV infection is often asymptomatic for several years and it is estimated that many cases are undiagnosed. View the new guidelines [here](http://canadiantaskforce.ca/guidelines/published-guidelines/hepatitis-c/):

Eligibility of Publicly-Funded Tubersol in Ontario

In February, the notice below was shared with the amended eligibility for publicly-funded Tubersol.

Interim Eligibility Criteria

Clients meeting the following criteria are eligible for publicly-funded Tubersol within Ontario:

- (i) Contacts of cases of active Tuberculosis
- (ii) Tests deemed to be “medically necessary” by the client’s physician or nurse practitioner, based on level of risk as identified in the Canadian Tuberculosis Standards, 7th edition available online [here](#).
- (iii) Clients under the age of 65 who are entering long-term care facilities. Note: Screening via TST is not recommended for clients over the age of 65.
- (iv) When required by an educational institution for admission or continuation in a day care or pre-school program, or a program of study in a school, community college, university or other educational institution.

Tuberculin Skin Test

Click [here](#) for a handy resource when performing and assessing Mantoux tests.

Tobacco Cessation an Important part of the Tobacco 'Endgame' Strategy

Tobacco use is responsible for 36 deaths per day in Ontario and it remains the leading cause of preventable death. With 30.8% of Timiskaming residents aged 12+ smoking, compared to 17.7% in Ontario (2013-14), the need for a strong local cessation system is evident. We encourage our health care partners to continue to prioritize delivering the 5A minimal contact tobacco intervention model (ask, advise, assess, assist, arrange). The [CAMH STOP Program](#) has expanded to Family Health Teams, Community Health Centres, Addiction Agencies and Nurse Practitioner-Led Clinics across Ontario and shows promising outcomes. The [Ottawa Model for Smoking Cessation](#) also provides support and capacity building for acute and primary care agencies.

Smoking and Pregnancy: 23% of mothers in Timiskaming were smoking at the time of delivery in 2015. The CAN-ADAPTT Canadian Smoking Cessation Clinical Practice Guidelines (2011) have a chapter with recommendations for pregnant and breastfeeding women. The clinical considerations section discusses the potential efficacious use of NRT.

<https://www.nicotinedependenceclinic.com/English/CANADAPTT/Documents/Guideline/Pregnant%20and%20Breastfeeding%20Women.pdf>

For information and support for pregnant and postpartum moms, visit www.pregnets.org.

Alcohol leads to more hospitalizations than heart attacks.

A new report from the Canadian Institute for Health Information [Alcohol Harm in Canada: Examining Hospitalizations Entirely caused by Alcohol and Strategies to Reduce Alcohol Harm](#) is shedding light on alcohol related harm.

In terms of health system strategies to address harmful levels of drinking and alcohol related harm, evidence shows that the process of screening, brief intervention and referral (**SBIR**) is effective in primary care and emergency care settings. The report states that each interaction with the health system represents an opportunity to reduce future harm. SBIR is a cost-effective approach for addressing harmful and hazardous drinking and it substantially reduces hospitalization costs.

To facilitate the uptake of SBIR, the College of Family Physicians of Canada and the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse have developed a clinical guide that incorporates Canada's Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines. You can find the guide and additional resources here: www.sbir-diba.ca.

Travel Health

The Timiskaming Health Unit offers travel health clinics to individuals travelling worldwide for business or pleasure! The travel clinics are staffed by Registered Nurses who provide travel consultations (free of charge) and immunizations (some costs apply). As of May 2017, all non-publically vaccines administered by the THU must be purchased in-house as per cold chain best practices.

Zika: If you have patients planning to visit a country with reported mosquito-borne Zika virus, here are some helpful resources.

1. General information for health care providers: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/zika-virus/health-professionals-zika-virus.html>
2. Counselling travellers: <http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/publications/diseases-conditions-maladies-affections/zika-virus-counselling-travelers-conseiller-voyageurs/index-eng.php>
3. Diagnosing: http://healthycanadians.gc.ca/publications/diseases-conditions-maladies-affections/zika-virus-info-health-prof-renseignements-prof-sante/index-eng.php?_ga=2.45705635.642491442.1498664704-2021364468.1461670858



Healthy Beginnings Clinic: Pre and Postnatal Nurse Practitioner Program

The Timiskaming Health Unit's Healthy Beginnings Clinic (Pre and Postnatal Nurse Practitioner Program) is offered out of our New Liskeard Office serving clients from across the THU district.

Eligible clients of the PPNP program include women who *experience barriers accessing primary care* and are planning a pregnancy, pregnant and/or have infants and children under the age of six. The goal is to build upon and link with local pre and postnatal services.



Lyme Disease

Lyme Disease is an infection caused by the bacteria "Borelia burgdorferi". Lyme disease is transmitted in Ontario through the bite of an infected black-legged tick, also known as "deer ticks" or the Ixodes Scapularis tick.

Black-legged ticks are most commonly found in southern and eastern Ontario, however ticks may be found anywhere. Not all blacklegged ticks carry Lyme disease. The Timiskaming district has not had evidence of black-legged ticks in our area for a number of years, however surveillance continues. For Ontario surveillance information and more, visit [Public Health Ontario-Lyme Disease](#).



The Public Health Ontario Laboratory (PHOL) has tick identification and testing on blacklegged ticks for surveillance purposes only. PHOL does not perform tick testing on ticks removed from non-human sources (e.g. dogs).

Visit www.ontario.ca/lyme for information on areas such as how to avoid tick bites, how to remove a tick, tick testing, Lyme disease symptoms and information for health care professionals.

For more detailed information for health professionals visit <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/lyme-disease/health-professionals-lyme-disease.html>

Other Resources & Information

Opioid Prescribing: with the alarming rise of overdoses and deaths associated with opioid use and misuse, opioid prescribing best practices are an important part of preventing addiction and overdose.

- Preventing the misuse of opioids <https://www.cmpa-acpm.ca/en/advice-publications/browse-articles/2015/preventing-the-misuse-of-opioids>
- 2017 Canadian Guideline for Opioid Therapy and Chronic Non-Cancer Pain <http://nationalpaincentre.mcmaster.ca/guidelines.html>
- New from Public Health Ontario - an [Interactive Opioid Tool](#). Explore the most recent opioid-related data on emergency department visits, hospitalizations and deaths. For more, see their [Opioid-Related Harms page](#).



THU is offering new **bilingual online prenatal classes**: "A New Life/Une Nouvelle Vie". Client information is available at www.timiskaminghu.com or by calling one of our offices or by visiting the site to register (no cost): www.timiskaming.unvanl.ca.

Canada's Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines were released on June 23, 2017, providing 10 science-based recommendations to enable cannabis users to reduce their health risks based on a scientific review by an international team of experts. The guidelines are published in the American Journal of Public Health and are available as a [public brochure](#) and an [evidence summary for health professionals](#).

Best Start: Risks of Cannabis on Fertility, Pregnancy, Breastfeeding and Parenting. [English](#) [French](#)