

Regional Public Health In Ottawa-Carleton Touching Your Life In So Many Ways



Public health in Ottawa-Carleton is delivered by the Regional government. People rely on public health everyday. If you ever had a vaccination, went out for dinner in a restaurant or received information about breast cancer, you have been in touch with public health

A snapshot of how public health saves money

Spending a dollar on public health...



saves taxpayers this much more...

Every \$1 spent on preventing teen pregnancies...

saves \$10 in medical, nutrition and welfare costs

Every \$1 spent on vaccination...

saves \$8 in health care costs

Every \$1 spent on health promotion...

saves \$7 in health care costs

It costs less to stay well than to get well!

Public health programs cost 8 cents a day per person. When you compare this to the more than \$1.2 billion spent on direct health care in Ottawa-Carleton, it is easy to see that public health is the ounce of prevention that avoids the pound of cure. Public health is a bargain but needs to be maintained to be effective. The consequences of not maintaining public health are disease outbreaks, tainted water and food, more youth smoking, poorer nutrition, more low birth weight babies, increased levels of chronic diseases like cancer and heart disease, and more sick and isolated seniors. Can we afford to take the risk?

Public health is a sound investment

- Public health prevention programs keep seniors out of hospitals. One fall leading to a hospital stay costs \$33,800.
- Public health dental programs reduce pain, suffering, absenteeism and prevent dental disease. Treating one child with dental neglect costs between \$350 and \$7,000.
- Sexual health programs and clinics prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and reduce unplanned pregnancies. Services to one person with HIV cost \$800,000. Adolescent pregnancies cost \$12,000/year to support a mother and child.
- Public health reduces preventable chronic diseases like cancer and heart disease. Ontarians already spend \$2 billion on heart disease.
- Immunization programs prevent deadly diseases. \$1 spent on measles shots alone saves \$4 in health costs.
- Home visiting and prevention programs help people have healthier babies and decrease abuse. One low birth weight baby can cost \$150,000 in intensive care and \$600,000 over a lifetime.
- Public health reduces car crashes, drug use, suicide and violence among teens and young adults. 90% of these injuries are preventable. Locally they cost us \$5.4 million.

What could happen with inadequate public health

- ☒ Communicable diseases could make a comeback. When New York City cut back on their funding for public health programs in the late 80's, tuberculosis came roaring back. New York City now has to spend 10 times as much to get this disease under control.
- ☒ Fewer public health staff in schools and the community could result in more youth smoking, abusing drugs and alcohol and higher levels of dental disease.
- ☒ If sexual health clinics are cut back or closed, unwanted pregnancies and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS could increase.
- ☒ Fewer public health nurses offering pre-natal education could mean the incidence of low birth weight babies could rise, forcing hospitals to increase neo-natal resources.
- ☒ Fewer resources for seniors including fall prevention and muscle strengthening programs may easily result in more hospitalizations, expensive care and reduced independence.

Public health in action

Stopping the outbreak of meningococcal disease

In December 1991, a rare and deadly disease took the lives of 3 high school students in Ottawa-Carleton. The Health Department rapidly responded with an outbreak control team that isolated the disease, provided antibiotics, established hotlines for the public, produced educational materials and immunized 12,000 children every day.

Preventing tobacco use and drug abuse

The use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs by teens declined for 20 years in a row. When the price of cigarettes decreased a few years ago, teen smoking rates rose sharply. Public health is combating teen smoking through enforcement, prevention and education. We assist thousands of people to stop smoking and our inspectors enforce the law with any retailer who sells tobacco to teens.

Community health education and training initiatives

Community health education and training initiatives educate our children and ourselves. They keep people healthy longer by preventing disease and disability. Last year, Jenny, a 30 year old mother with a new baby, was in a head on collision with another car. Her baby survived the crash unharmed because Jenny had been to a Health Department "You and Your Baby" group the week before the crash and her car safety seat was adjusted as part of the injury prevention training. Had she not taken the course, her baby would have been ejected from the seat and killed in the crash. The support and training we provide to families help develop safe and healthy behaviours. Whether it's the area of bicycle helmets, nutrition, or healthy sexuality, these health promotion initiatives continue to save many lives, reduce the spread of disease and provide our children with the best possible start.

What does public health do for me?

I'm worried about leaving the hospital after having my baby. Who will help me?



How will I know if my car seat is properly fitted?

How do I know if I'm protected from second hand smoke at work or with my kids in the mall?



How do I know if it's safe to swim at local beaches?

There's a history of heart disease in my family. What can I do to prevent it?



I'm a senior who wants to be active in winter but I'm afraid to walk outside.

I have an 11 year old and his friends are already experimenting with drugs and I don't know what to do.



My mother had breast cancer. How do I prevent this for me and my daughters?

I'm concerned about my elderly neighbour. She refuses my help and her health is getting worse.



Here's a snapshot of a few services regional public health provides

We telephone mothers of all newborns and provide you with support on the phone, by mail, and through home visits.

We provide car safety seat clinics and training.

We work to create more smoke free spaces to protect you and your children from the harmful effects of second hand smoke. Call our Tobacco Information Line for information about concerns.

We regularly test the water to ensure it's safe to swim and broadcast this information to you on radio and TV stations.

Call us for information, print resources or to book a presentation or display on heart disease. We support Regional Heart Beat: a coalition of 80 community partners providing services to reduce heart disease.

Come and join one of the mall walking or chair exercise groups offered by the Health Department. We can also help you and any caregivers learn how to prevent falls.

Call us and we'll talk about how you can help keep your kids drug free. We provides materials and resources for health education in the schools and specifically for teens.

We provide information on all early detection practices for breast cancer and can work with you to reduce your risk factors.

Call us for information and advice. A public health nurse can visit. We have a program that reaches isolated seniors and works with others in the community to prevent isolation.

**Your Regional Government
Touching your life in so many ways**

Key references

One low birth weight baby can cost \$150,000 in intensive care and \$600,000 over a lifetime.
Ottawa-Carleton Health Department reinvestment submission to the District Health Council, 1996.

Every \$1 spent on measles shots saves \$4 in health care costs.
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound Health Unit, 1998.

Every \$1 spent on preventing teen pregnancies saves \$10 in medical, nutrition and welfare costs.
Orton, M.J. and Rosenblatt, E. (1986). Adolescent pregnancy in Ontario: progress in prevention. Hamilton: Planned Parenthood in Ontario.

Every \$1 spent on vaccination saves \$8 in health care costs.
Submission to the Standing Committee for Finance and Economic Affairs on the downloading of public health and social services to the property tax base. City of North York Public Health Department. (April 1997).

Every \$1 spent on preventing low birth weight babies saves \$3 in health care costs.
Wahl B. (March 1993). "Will save money by maintaining public health programs".

Every \$1 spent on health promotion saves \$7 in health care costs.
Grakist, D., RN. (May/June 1997). "The changing face of public health nursing" Registered Nurse.

One fall leading to a hospital stay costs \$33,800.
Ottawa-Carleton Health Department reinvestment submission to the District Health Council, 1996. O'Loughlin and Robitaille, 1991.

One mother and child cost \$12,000 a year to support.
Orton, M.J. & Rosenblatt, E. (1986). Adolescent pregnancy in Ontario: progress in prevention. Hamilton: Planned Parenthood in Ontario.

One person with HIV costs \$800,000.
Frank, J. (1996). 15 years of AIDS in Canada. Canadian Social Trends, 41: 4-10.

Ontarians already spend \$2 billion on heart disease.
Schabas, R. (1993). Opportunities for promoting heart health. Report of the Chief Medical Officer of Health. Ontario: Ministry of Health.

Public Health - A vital part of your community's infrastructure.
Association of Local Public Health Agencies (March, 1997).

Public health reduces car crashes, drug use, suicide and violence among teens and young adults.
National Research Council. Injury in America: a continuing public health problem, 1985.

Public health programs in Ottawa-Carleton cost 8 cents a day per person. When you compare this to the more than \$1.2 billion spent on direct health care in Ottawa-Carleton...
Health Department calculations and the Foundation for change technical report, DHC, October 1995.

Rise in tuberculosis cases in New York City.
War against TB being won again. The Globe and Mail. (April 1997).

Treating one child with dental neglect costs between \$350 and \$7,000.
Ontario Society of Public Health Dentists brief to the Mandatory Program Advisory Committee, 1998.