

# Niagara's Yearly Checkup

NIAGARA  
INFO-DINE



Healthy  
smiles  
Ontario



think and drive  
www.thinkanddrive.net

www.niagararegion.ca

## Continued Responsiveness



Gary Burroughs  
Regional Chair  
Chair, Board of Health



Dr. Robin Williams  
Medical Officer  
of Health

Following the H1N1 pandemic, 2010 afforded us an opportunity to reflect on that experience, evaluate our response, and implement those changes which will better prepare us to handle other public health emergencies. H1N1 allowed us to strengthen our community connections and relationships with partners and apply renewed energy to our day-to-day work of preventing disease and injury, and promoting and protecting the health of all Niagara residents.

While we took the opportunity to learn from H1N1, we also reflected upon the challenges ahead for public health. As your Board of Health and local health unit, it is our responsibility to provide effective programs and services to meet the needs of Niagara. Therefore, it is essential we identify health

priorities and work together as a region to develop strategies to strengthen the health of our community.

### We have identified 10 public health priority areas for Niagara:

#### 1. Early childhood development

Early childhood experiences have a great impact on the overall health and well-being of individuals throughout their lifetime. It is important that Niagara's children get the best possible start in life so that they have success in achieving developmental milestones and improving their health across the lifespan.

#### 2. Tobacco control

Smoking continues to be the number one cause of preventable death and disease in Ontario. This is of great concern in Niagara as our smoking rates continue to remain above the provincial average. We need to build on our gains and take action now to remind Niagara residents of the health dangers of smoking and to encourage their efforts to quit.

#### 3. Preventable injuries

Approximately 95 per cent of all injuries are both predictable and preventable. In Niagara, falls are one of the most common types of injury that affect people across the lifespan. Every 10 minutes someone visits a Niagara emergency department due to an injury. There is a series of steps individuals can take to reduce this risk in their homes, schools, workplaces, and communities.

#### 4. Cancer

Cancer continues to be a major cause of death and disease in Niagara and accounts for approximately 30 per cent of all deaths, which is consistent with the Canadian rate. Nearly half of all cancers can be prevented through healthy eating and active living, as well as through regular cancer screening.

#### 5. Chronic diseases

Chronic diseases, such as heart disease and stroke, are leading causes of death across Niagara. Risk may be reduced by decreasing smoking and alcohol consumption, and increasing healthy eating and physical activity.

(continued)

### 2010 – 2014 Board of Health (Regional Council)

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## 6. Obesity

There is an alarming trend that Niagarans' rates of overweight and obesity are increasing beyond the rest of the province, especially for youth. Obesity is an important risk factor for many chronic diseases, so it is vital to work on increasing healthy eating and physical activity where we live, learn, work, and play.

## 7. Food and water safety

Safe food and water are essential to health. Public Health keeps food and water safe by inspecting food establishments and certifying food handlers in safe food handling and preparation.

## 8. Infectious disease control

Infectious diseases are a continuing concern for everyone, as they can cause serious health problems. Prevention and control of infectious diseases is a key role of public health. Public Health has a number of programs and services in place to prevent and reduce infectious diseases. It can be as simple as cover your cough and clean your hands.

## 9. Public health emergency response planning and operations

Niagara Region Public Health (NRPH) and Niagara Emergency Medical Services work together to respond to urgent health issues 24 hours a day and seven days a week. NRPH is involved in emergency planning and preparedness

for Niagara, and in any emergency event that has the potential to have an impact on the community's health. In order to ensure complete coverage, NRPH has an on-call system which can work quickly with local and provincial officials to respond to emergency events.

## 10. Enabling residents to access the path to health in our community, schools and workplaces

Niagarans will have the capacity to lead a healthier, more engaged life when they are part of a community that strives to build and sustain the needed resources, supports, and partnerships to maintain their health. The health of an individual is often a reflection of the health of their community.

We recognize that these priorities unfold across the lifespan and are committed to providing public health programs and services that range from prevention through to intervention. It has been said that it takes a village to raise a child. We like to use this same analogy to describe the efforts needed to improve the public health of Niagara. It will take a community, from the individual to organizational level, to improve our overall health – physical, psychological, and social.

As we prepare for the challenges and opportunities ahead, we do so with a new Board of Health. We look forward to developing relationships, working with our Board of Health, and continuing the momentum from last year through the next four years in order to make Niagara a healthier place to live, learn, work, and play.

## Immunization Clinics

### General

#### Throughout 2010:

- 90 general immunization clinics were held across the Niagara region
- approximately 2,500 immunizations were administered

### Seasonal Flu

#### 2010/2011 influenza season:

- 14 large-scale community flu immunization clinics were held, providing over 5,400 flu vaccinations

### School-based

#### 2009/2010 school year approximately:

- 4,000 Grade 7 students received the Hepatitis B vaccine
- 4,000 Grade 7 students received the Menactra vaccine
- 1,500 female Grade 8 students received the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine

### Travel Health

- 1,346 clients attended travel health clinics in 2010
- 2,232 vaccinations were provided



## Healthy smiles Ontario

Dental health is an important part of overall health. The Healthy Smiles Ontario program, officially launched in 2010, ensures that children and youth can have regular visits with a dentist or dental hygienist.

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

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

## Fact: Babies Cry



On November 20, 2010 Niagara Region Public Health in collaboration with community partners launched the Shaken Baby Syndrome (SBS) Prevention and Awareness campaign. The goal is to heighten awareness and inform the public about normal infant crying as it is the most common trigger for SBS among caregivers.

**Remember:  
Never shake a baby.  
All babies cry.**

Anyone who cares for a baby should have an understanding of infant crying and be prepared with strategies for coping with a crying baby.

# 2010 Facts & Figures

Public health inspectors certified **1,925** food handlers through **96** food handling training courses.

Public health inspectors conducted **6,058** routine inspections and **1,230** follow-up inspections at **2,523** food establishments and **194** farmers' market vendors in Niagara.

**1,327** health hazard complaints (e.g., extensive mould, flooding, serious odours, major disrepair) were investigated.

Public health inspectors conducted **377** routine inspections and **25** follow-up inspections of migrant worker housing.

Public health inspectors conducted **727** routine inspections, **50** follow-up inspections and **16** complaint inspections/ investigations at personal service setting establishments (e.g., tattoo parlours, nail salons).

A total of **1,137** rabies investigations were conducted based on residents' concerns.

Environmental Health and the Infectious Disease programs collaboratively investigated **68** institutional outbreaks and **11** community outbreaks.

In an effort to raise awareness of infection prevention and control across our community, Infectious Disease staff delivered over **150** education sessions to a variety of community agencies, including long-term care facilities, hospitals, and daycares.

The Community Mental Health Program served approximately **1,000** individuals with serious mental illness in 2010, and these individuals were provided with approximately **20,000** visits from staff.

The Health Bus provided outreach health services to **2,893** clients for services such as immunization, pain management, and smoking cessation.



Sexual Health Centres provided **1,448** HIV blood tests.

Sexual Health Centres provided sexual health services to residents of Niagara through over **51,233** client contacts.

The 2010 Driven to Quit Contest registered **1,052** people from Niagara who committed to make a quit-smoking attempt.

Tobacco control officers conducted **641** tobacco vendor inspections in 2010 and **87** charges were issued for selling tobacco to minors.

The ICANwalk campaign received **635** completed walkability checklists. The checklists contained information to promote walkable communities and neighbourhoods (e.g., sidewalks, street lighting). Visit [www.healthylivingniagara.com](http://www.healthylivingniagara.com) for more information.

A community consultation was held to determine the best place to focus efforts on leading safe, healthy, active lives so youth can flourish. This resulted in nearly **2,000** completed surveys from community groups and citizens, and comments from **193** members of community groups and agencies during facilitated discussions.

**450** Safe Play Every Day kits were distributed to kindergarten teachers and early childhood educators throughout Niagara.



## Social Media was used to:

- promote the 2010/2011 Niagara Health Promotion Grants facebook page
- promote the Shaken Baby Syndrome campaign by the use of Facebook ads
- inform residents of urgent updates relating to the diesel spill in the Welland canal

More than **287,000** Public Health pages were viewed on the Niagara Region website.

In an effort to raise awareness of injury prevention throughout the Niagara region, Niagara Emergency Medical Services Paramedics participated in over **83** community events.

The "Share a cup with a Brave Canuck" campaign raised over **640** Tim Horton's cards, each with a value of **\$10** for men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces.



**4,323** calls were received by the Parent Talk Line.

**99.8** per cent of women who had a baby received a follow-up call from a public health nurse.

**1,151** newborn babies were visited at home by a public health nurse.

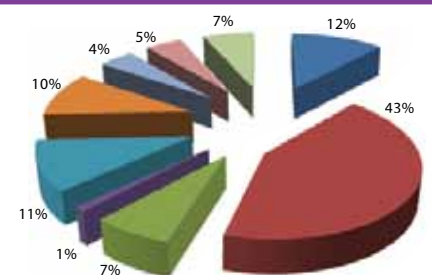
**548** families were assisted through the Home Visiting program.

The Dental Program screened over **24,000** children and youth, and **838** qualified for dental services.

**554** expectant mothers received prenatal education to promote a healthy pregnancy to ensure healthy child development, and to prepare them for parenthood.

## Niagara Region Public Health 2010 Budget

(Gross Dollars)



- 100% Funded Programs (\$7,993,263)
- Emergency Services (\$29,216,354)
- Ambulance Communications (\$4,979,553)
- Vector Borne Diseases (WNV) (\$716,063)
- Population Health (\$7,722,167)
- Clinical Services (\$6,890,267)
- Medical (\$3,000,940)
- Chronic Disease Prevention (\$3,175,973)
- Health Protection & Promotion (\$4,417,116)

## Niagara Region Public Health Accredited since 1995

In May 2010, Niagara Region Public Health (NRPH) participated in a voluntary accreditation process through the Ontario Community Council on Community Health Accreditation and received a three-year unconditional award. The intent of this practice is to examine organizational structure and administrative and management processes, offer recommendations for improvement, and highlight successes and accomplishments. Through accreditation, NRPH is able to demonstrate accountability, commitment to excellence, and to facilitate continuous quality improvement.



## NEMS Awarded

On June 1, 2010, after a five-year pilot, Niagara Region signed a performance agreement with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in support of Niagara Emergency Medical Services (NEMS) continuing to operate the Niagara ambulance communication centre.

NEMS is proud to be awarded with this prestigious contract and looks forward to future innovations and technologies to strengthen our capacity to respond to the emergency medical needs of our community.

**Niagara Emergency Medical Services responded to 77,460 calls in 2010.**

## The National Paramedic Competition

The National Paramedic Competition is a one-day annual event that challenges paramedics to use skills from all aspects of their profession. In 2010, Niagara EMS had another very successful showing, taking first place in the Advanced Care Paramedic (ACP) division and second place in the Primary Care Paramedic (PCP) division. We are proud of this achievement as it demonstrates dedication and commitment to quality assurance to the profession of paramedicine. Over 35 Paramedic teams, including the Canadian Armed Forces, and a team from the Netherlands participated.



Front row (L to R): Carolyn Chandler-Hill, Dan Kerr, Chief John Cunnane, Tracy Groszeibl, Kelly King  
Back Row (L to R): Rick Ferron, Kate McArthur, Ryan Carriere, Graeme Mitchell, Brock Browett, Shane Eickmann and Grant Little

## Mandatory Food Handler Certification By-Law



Food safety is an important piece of public health programming in Niagara and we are proud to officially launch the new Mandatory Food Handler Certification By-Law for food establishments in Niagara.

### Food establishments will be required to have the following:

- A minimum of one owner/operator with a current and valid Food Handler Certificate;
- A minimum of one food handler at all times, while in operation, with a current and valid Food Handler Certificate; and
- A current and valid food handler certificate with a photo identification card for each certificate.

The by-law will come into effect over the course of the next couple of years in accordance with the following schedule:

- **Compliance for high-risk establishments by January 1, 2013.**
- **Compliance for medium-risk establishments by January 1, 2014.**

## Learning from H1N1

Following H1N1, Niagara Region Public Health (NRPH) conducted a thorough evaluation to improve our response to future events that may require us to redeploy and respond in a similar way. Focus groups, telephone and online surveys were used to get feedback from Niagara Region staff, community partners, and residents.

The feedback has been analyzed and work is underway to address suggestions and strengthen systems and processes to respond. Examples include revisions to business continuity plans and updates to the Mass Immunization Plan. In addition, specialized training has been ongoing with employees. We appreciate the feedback, as this comprehensive review will allow us to better respond to public health emergencies.

# Engaging Youth to Promote Health



The Niagara Health Promotion Grant (NHPG) program is a funding opportunity to support youth-led health promotion and prevention initiatives within secondary schools and community groups in Niagara. Youth groups

choose from a variety of health topics such as healthy eating and physical activity when creating their grant proposals.

NHPG encourages youth to become engaged in healthy behaviours and choices. In 2009/2010, 27 secondary school groups and three youth-based community groups in Niagara participated in the NHPG program. As a result of this program, a multitude of innovative projects and events have been created within schools and surrounding

communities for youth ages 12-18 on health behaviours and choices.

For 2010/2011, a total of 49 groups are participating, including 14 youth-based community groups. Social media was used as a tool to reach out and engage youth.

## Support and Advice for Parents



2010 was a successful year for families participating in the Triple P Positive Parenting Program throughout Niagara. Close to 100 families with children between the ages of 2-12 years attended the eight-week program.

Parents' comments included the following:

*"Our family is at peace now. There is less stress and bad feelings."*

*"Now I can have a better relationship with my children. We are all so much happier."*

*"...it has really changed our home atmosphere by becoming more calm and harmonious. Thank you for all of your expertise and guidance."*

Mix it up! is a fun, new, interactive healthy eating and active play workshop for both parents and their young children (ages 3-6).

There were eight workshops offered throughout the Niagara region in 2010 with much success! Parents expressed their enjoyment and greatly appreciated the knowledge gained. We are continuing to offer workshops throughout Niagara, with plans to expand it into a workshop series.

## Students Placements

Niagara Region Public Health is proud to host students from across various post-secondary institutions. During 2010, 30 unpaid student placements were completed, three medical students completed their public health rotation, and 68 students completed job shadowing opportunities with many of our staff (i.e., public health nurse, health promoter, dental hygienist). The majority of our students come to us from Brock University, Niagara College, and McMaster University; however, we welcome students who are interested in learning more about Niagara. We also offer in-class presentations to post-secondary institutions that feature the work of public health practitioners and our work in the community.

## Educating Future Physicians in Niagara

Did you know that Niagara Region Public Health (NRPH) is a teaching health unit? Public Health works with McMaster University to train medical students and residents – Niagara's future doctors.

Benefits to educating future physicians at NRPH include the following:

- Attracting future doctors and their families to Niagara
- Teaching medical students and interns about the health challenges in Niagara
- Encouraging new and future physicians to improve the health of all Niagara residents

*"Niagara Region Public Health offers excellent learning opportunities in major areas of Public Health for junior and senior Community Medicine Residents. I thoroughly enjoyed working with the staff during my Communicable Disease rotation. There was a perfect balance of independent work, formal teaching, and case-based learning. I was very impressed with the supportive and welcoming atmosphere."*

Mila Ivanova

*"I knew that I wanted to gain exposure to the important public health initiatives in the Niagara Region. Working with the Associate Medical Officer of Health as an elective student enabled me to see first-hand the exceptional programming offered in public health - from school-based substance use workshops through to primary care outreach through the Health Bus Program. I know that I will carry my learnings with me into my practice in the future."*

Ashley Heaslip

*"The staff were incredibly keen and supportive. They were always willing to take time to discuss their work and field my numerous questions. I'm looking forward to being back in the Niagara region and spending more time with them as my training progresses."*

Mustafa Hirji

# Public Health ... Only a Phone Call Away

## Health Connection Line

For confidential health information relating to public health issues  
**905-688-8248 or 1-888-505-6074**

## Dental Health Line, ext. 7399

For information on dental programs and services

## Flu Information Line, ext. 7443

For Flu shot clinic schedule and general information about the flu shot

## Health Bus Line, ext. 7512

For schedule of community locations

## Immunization Reporting Line, ext. 7459

For parents/guardians to report their child's immunization(s)

## Parent Talk Information Line, ext. 7555

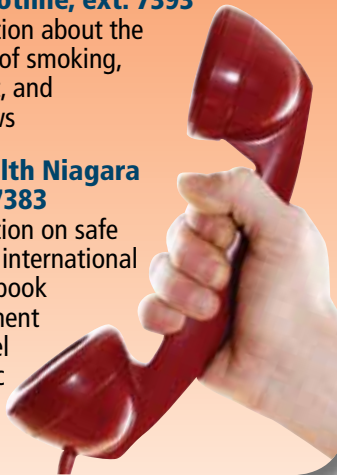
For information on pregnancy, parenting, breastfeeding, postpartum depression, child development, clinics, car seat safety and classes, and Ontario Early Years Centres

## Tobacco Hotline, ext. 7393

For Information about the health risks of smoking, ways to quit, and smoking laws

## Travel Health Niagara Line, ext. 7383

For Information on safe and healthy international travel or to book an appointment for our Travel Health Clinic



## OUR LOCATIONS:

### Main Office/Office of the Medical Officer of Health

2201 St. Davids Road,  
Campbell East  
Thorold  
Phone: 905-688-3762  
Toll Free: 1-800-263-7248  
Fax: 905-682-3901

### Branch Offices

#### Niagara Falls

5710 Kitchener Street  
Phone: 905-356-1538  
Fax: 905-356-7377  
Sexual Health Centre  
Phone: 905-358-3636  
Fax: 905-358-2717

#### Welland

200 Division Street  
Phone: 905-735-5697  
Fax: 905-735-4895  
Sexual Health Centre  
Phone: 905-734-1014  
Fax: 905-734-1770

#### Fort Erie

43 Hagey Avenue  
Phone: 905-871-6513  
Fax: 905-871-3020  
Sexual Health Centre  
Phone: 905-871-5320  
Fax: 905-871-3333

#### St. Catharines

Sexual Health Centre  
277 Welland Avenue  
Phone: 905-688-3817  
Toll Free: 1-800-263-5757  
Fax: 905-688-6063

#### Thorold

Community Mental Health Program  
3550 Schmon Pkwy, 2nd Floor, Unit #2  
Thorold, ON L2V 4T7  
Phone: 905-688-2854  
Fax: 905-684-9798

#### Niagara-on-the-Lake

Emergency Services Division  
509 Glendale Avenue East  
Phone: 905-984-5050  
Fax: 905-688-5079

## Public Health in Niagara

### We PROTECT Niagara residents by:

- Testing water
- Inspecting food premises
- Providing safe food handling training
- Conducting environmental investigations
- Enforcing tobacco laws
- Preventing the spread of infectious diseases and sexually transmitted infections
- Providing paramedic and ambulance dispatch services

### We PROMOTE health by:

- Offering prenatal classes
- Providing parenting information
- Conducting home visits for new parents
- Providing confidential sexual health services
- Offering breastfeeding support
- Encouraging regular physical activity and healthy eating
- Providing counselling for adults experiencing serious and persistent mental illness

### We PREVENT disease and injury by:

- Offering child, adult, and travel-related vaccinations
- Promoting road safety for drivers and pedestrians
- Educating citizens about heart disease risk factors
- Holding car seat education classes
- Providing dental care for eligible children and adults
- Raising awareness around substance abuse
- Encouraging regular cancer screenings, such as pap smears and mammograms

**These are just some of the many services we offer. If you are interested in learning more about Public Health, please visit [www.niagararegion.ca](http://www.niagararegion.ca)**

## Health Story of Niagara

Are you interested in learning more about the health of your community?  
Curious to know about trends in Niagara?  
Check out [www.niagararegion.ca](http://www.niagararegion.ca) and search Health Story of Niagara