

A close-up photograph of a middle-aged man with grey hair and a young boy with blonde hair. The man is smiling broadly, and the boy is smiling and resting his head on the man's shoulder. The background is softly blurred.

# Feeling Good!

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A Resource for Adults 50+

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# Practice Being Mindful

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Practicing mindfulness can help you cope with changes and enjoy life to the fullest. Mindfulness is paying attention to what is going on in the moment in a non-judgmental way. It's about what you are feeling, thinking and sensing in the moment. Practicing mindfulness has many health benefits. It has been found to decrease stress, depression and anxiety as well as increase an individual's overall feeling of well-being. Being mindful is something all of us can practice every day!

How can you practice mindfulness? Here are some tips:

- Take time to relax in a quiet space
- Take deep breaths when feeling stressed
- Interact with friends and family
- Participate in community activities
- Try taking a yoga class
- Savor the moment!





# Maintaining Your Smile

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People used to think that losing their teeth was a natural part of aging. It isn't. Many older adults today are keeping most, if not all of their natural teeth. This has allowed older adults to enjoy a better quality of life as well as improved health. Good, daily oral health is important for your overall health and well-being. A clean, healthy and pain free mouth contributes to better chewing of healthy food, speaking clearly, sleeping well and feeling good about yourself. It is just as important to look after your teeth as it is to keep the rest of your body in good shape.

Poor oral health can greatly affect a person's ability to consume all of the nutrients needed for good overall health. It could be caused by tooth loss, dry mouth or dentures that do not fit properly. Getting enough nutritious food helps the body resist infection and inflammation including periodontal disease (gum disease). Gum disease looks like red, puffy gums

that bleed easily. Many studies suggest a link between poor oral health and serious, sometimes life threatening medical conditions in older adults including pneumonia, diabetes and heart disease.

To maintain good oral health brush your teeth and floss daily to remove food particles, bacteria and plaque from your teeth. Plaque build-up can lead to tooth decay and periodontal disease. It is recommended to brush two times a day for two minutes with a soft bristled toothbrush and fluoridated toothpaste and floss once a day.

Did you know that flossing cleans a third of your tooth's surface where your toothbrush can't reach. Flossing aids are available if flossing is difficult for you. If you wear a partial or complete denture it is important to remove at night and clean daily.

REMEMBER: A healthy mouth means a healthy you!

[durham.ca/  
oralhealth](http://durham.ca/oralhealth)

# What's in Your Bottle?

When we think about cancer and its causes, we often think about smoking, ultraviolet rays and chemicals like arsenic. All of these substances are considered “class 1 carcinogens”, indicating that there is strong evidence that they cause cancer. What many people find surprising is that alcohol is also a class 1 carcinogen. According to the Canadian Cancer Society, only 1/3 of people in Ontario are aware that they can reduce their risk for cancer by reducing the amount of alcohol they drink.

It may be surprising to know that you don't have to be a heavy drinker to have an increased risk for cancer. As little as 1 serving of alcohol per day for women and 2 per day for men can increase the risk for 7 types of cancer. According to Cancer Care Ontario, it is estimated that in 2012 nearly 1 million Ontarians reported drinking alcohol at levels that put them at higher risk for cancer.

## Alcohol has been linked to cancer of the:

- Mouth
- Neck
- Throat
- Liver
- Female breast
- Colon
- Rectum



It doesn't matter what type of alcohol you drink (beer, wine or liquor), the risk remains the same. Similarly, cancer risk also increases regardless of whether you binge drink or spread your drinking out over the week.

## So what can you do?

If you choose to drink alcohol and want to reduce your risk of cancer, the Canadian Cancer Society recommends:

- Keep it to less than 1 standard drink a day for women. The safest option for women who are pregnant, planning to become pregnant or breastfeeding is to not drink alcohol at all
- Keep it to less than 2 standard drinks a day for men

## To reduce your risks from alcohol:

- If you don't drink, don't start. If you choose to drink, drink less
- Eat before and while you are drinking
- Think about the strength of your drink and choose one with less alcohol
- Choose non-alcoholic drinks more often
- Set a limit for yourself and stick to it
- Know what a standard drink is

# One standard drink equals

**341 ml (12 oz) bottle 5% alcohol  
beer, cider, cooler**



**43 ml (1.5 oz) shot of 40% hard liquor  
(vodka, rum, whiskey, gin, etc)**



**142 ml (5 oz) glass of 12% wine**



**Remember, high alcohol % beer, coolers, cider and fortified  
wines contain more than one standard drink**

Your current health and family health history can also impact your risks for getting heart disease and cancer. Speak to your health care provider about your personal risks from drinking alcohol.

[durham.ca/alcohol](http://durham.ca/alcohol)

# Safe Medication Use

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## **Do you regularly take medications (prescription or non-prescription)?**

If YES, please keep reading for tips on safe medication use.

## **Keep an up-to-date medication list:**

An up-to-date list of all your current medications helps prevent medication errors. Share this list with your health care team and family members to keep everyone informed of your medical needs in case of an emergency. Include prescription and non-prescription medications, vitamins, herbal supplements, puffers, creams and ointments.

## **Know your medications:**

When you're prescribed a new medication, ask as much information about that medication as needed. Ask your health care provider or pharmacist how to use it, how to store it, possible side effects and symptoms you should report to your health care provider.

## **Read labels:**

Before you take any medication, read the label to make sure you are taking the right medication and dose. Medications can be packaged in similar bottles and have similar names. Accidentally taking the wrong medication can cause you harmful side effects.

## **Know what to do if you forget a medication:**

If you forget to take your medication it is important to seek advice from a pharmacist or your health care provider. If you forget to take a prescription medication and you still have the medication information sheet, you can read the 'missed dose' section for more information.

## **Store medications properly:**

Medications should be stored in a cool, dry, secure place, such as a dresser drawer, kitchen cabinet (away from stove or sink). Do not store medications in the bathroom because heat and moisture can damage them. Always ask the pharmacist for proper storage instructions.

## **Use one pharmacy:**

It is best to choose one pharmacy for your medication needs. This helps to ensure that all your medication records are at one location and reduces the risk for harmful interactions between prescriptions.



### **Return expired medications:**

Medications that have expired are no longer effective. An expired medication could cause a dangerous interaction with other medications if taken at the same time. You can bring your expired or unused medications to your pharmacist for safe and proper disposal.

### **Taking your medications:**

Take your medications as prescribed, and on time. Tell your health care provider if you are experiencing any side effects.

(adapted from PHAC Keeping Track of Your Medicine <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/seniors-aines/publications/public/injury-blessure/safelive-securite/chap6-eng.php>)





# Tobacco-Free Living

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Quitting smoking is the most important thing you can do to improve your health. Even long-term smokers who quit can improve their quality of life and decrease their overall health risks. The sooner one quits smoking, the better the long-term benefits. Quitting smoking can sometimes take several attempts, but it's never too late to try!

## Health Effects of Tobacco

In Ontario, tobacco causes 13,000 deaths per year or 36 people per day. Tobacco causes many disabling diseases, including lung and other cancers, heart disease and emphysema. Many conditions that are common in later life, like mobility restrictions and decreased physical fitness, can be worsened by smoking and exposure to second-hand smoke.

Older adults who smoke have less dense bones and a higher risk of osteoporosis and fractures than non-smokers. The risk of developing cataracts is higher for people who smoke than for non-smokers.

## Health Benefits of Quitting

Quitting smoking can improve many of the harmful health effects caused by smoking. The health benefits of quitting are immediate. Within 20 minutes of your last cigarette, your blood pressure decreases and your pulse returns to normal. After four days, your lung capacity increases. After one year, your risk

of heart attack is cut in half! Two thirds of current smokers want to quit and with the right support they can be successful.

## Tips to help you quit:

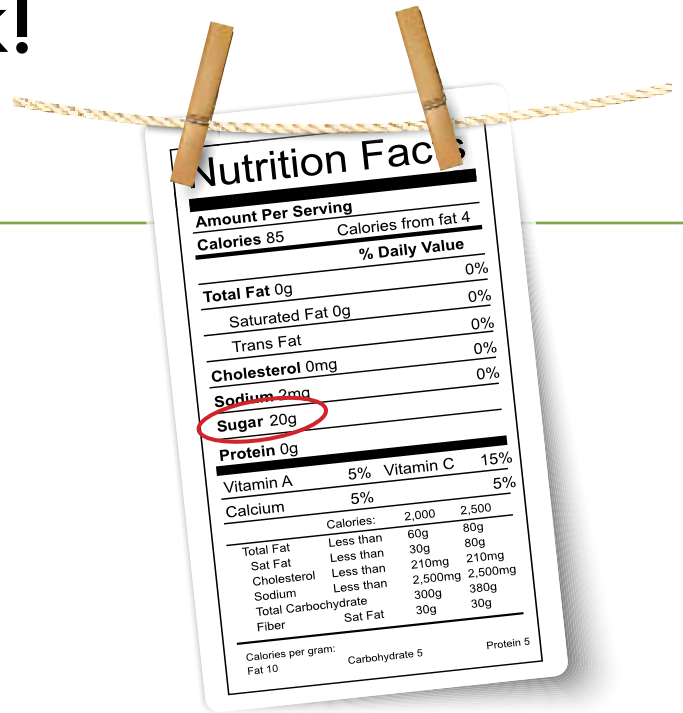
- Write down on paper why you smoke
- Figure out what triggers you to smoke
- Find healthier options like being physically active
- Make your car and home smoke-free; don't carry matches/lighter or cigarettes
- Get support from a close friend, family member, or health care professional
- Learn from previous quit attempts and what didn't go so well
- Pick a quit date and write it on your calendar
- Practice positive thoughts and reward yourself

It's never too late to quit. You have options. We can help.

Smokers' Helpline: 1-877-513-5333

[durham.ca/tobacco](http://durham.ca/tobacco)

# Rethink Your Drink!



Do you know how much sugar you are drinking? Sugar can be hiding in some of the favourite beverages that you, your children or grandchildren might be drinking.

The Nutrition Facts Table on each drink displays the amount of sugar in grams. Grams of sugar can be difficult to visualize. You can also think of grams as teaspoons or sugar cubes. For every 4 grams of sugar = 1 cube or 1 teaspoon.

Sugary drinks are drinks that contain added sugar. They can include, but are not limited to:

- Soda pop/soft drinks
- Fruit flavoured drinks (e.g. punch, cocktail, lemonade)
- Sports drinks
- Energy drinks
- Vitamin waters
- Sweetened/iced teas
- Hot chocolate
- Speciality/ice coffees

## What about 'unsweetened' or 100% fruit juice?

- 'Unsweetened' fruit juice does not have added sugar and is often rich in nutrients but it still contains high amounts of naturally occurring sugars which can have the same effect as added sugar

- Fruit juice also lacks the fibre of whole fruit. Fibre not only has great health benefits but it also helps you feel more full
- Fruit juice is fine in small amounts but it is important to remember it can contain as much sugar as pop

## Why is water the best choice?

- Water has no sugar
- Sugary drinks are the main source of added sugar in the daily diet of children
- Consuming too many of these drinks can lead to tooth decay, weight gain and obesity. Obesity puts you at risk for other health problems such as heart disease, high blood pressure and diabetes

As an adult, parent, caregiver or grandparent, you can play a role in reducing the amount of sugary beverages consumed by children every day as well as rethinking your drink.

# Walk Yourself to Better Health

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It's that time in your life when you may be looking ahead and wondering if you are investing enough in your finances and health to prepare for your future. It is important to be physically active to be ready for all the exciting stages in your life. Becoming an older adult is one of those stages!

Did you know all adults, including older adults, should get at least 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity per week? Ten minutes or more at a time counts, and walking is a great way to achieve this goal.

More physical activity provides greater health benefits such as reducing the risk of high blood pressure, heart diseases, stroke, type 2 diabetes, certain types of cancer and osteoporosis. Being physically active can lead to improved fitness and strength, and it can make you feel good! What an investment in your future!

## For starters, try these tips:

- Join an exercise class or walking group
- Take up an old favourite sport or try something new
- Take the dog for a walk each day
- Walk to the park with your grandchildren
- Walk to your destinations
- Try walking for ten minutes or more at a time and build up to 30 minutes every day
- Go for a walk with friends and family

- Try new routes so you don't get bored - in your neighbourhood, indoor tracks, mall walking
- Explore one of the many beautiful trails Durham Region has to offer

The first step is to set a goal, make a plan and track your success. Being active now increases the chance you will continue to be active later in life. After all, there are leisurely walks to take and mountains to climb. The choice is yours!

To order your free Physical Activity Planner or Walking is for Life booklet, visit [durham.ca/physicalactivity](http://durham.ca/physicalactivity) or call the Durham Region Health Connection Line at 905-666-6241 or 1-800-841-2729.

[durham.ca/physicalactivity](http://durham.ca/physicalactivity)



# Prevent Falls: Keep your home safe inside and outside

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One out of five people over the age of 18 will fall this year. In fact, falls are the leading cause of injury and hospitalization in Durham Region. In addition, 50% of these falls happen in the home.

Your risk of falling increases with age. Therefore it is important to understand what can cause a fall and how you can prevent them. Keeping a safe home environment is a great way to prevent falls. Use the checklist below to see how safe your home environment is, inside and outside:

## Inside:

- Stairs and steps have hand rails
- Uneven surfaces are made noticeable
- Floors are clear of clutter
- Floor mats have rubber backing to prevent slipping
- Loose cords are taped down or run along walls
- Dark areas have proper lighting
- Know where your pets are to avoid tripping over them
- A sturdy step stool or ladder is used when reaching for an item
- Shower and tub have slip resistant surfaces
- Safety aids are used (raised toilet seat, shower bar, bath seat, etc.)

## Outside:

- Front steps and walkway are kept in good repair
- Stairs and steps have hand rails
- Driveway, walkway and steps are free from ice, snow and leaves
- Entrances to the home have proper lighting
- Tools and outdoor items are properly stored when not in use
- Mailbox is easy to reach

## Other helpful tips:

- Wear supportive shoes or non-skid socks when indoors
- Wear supportive shoes or boots when outside
- Never sit or stand on the top 3 rungs of a ladder
- Keep a clear path from your bedroom to the bathroom and use a light during the night
- Take your time!

[durham.ca/falls](http://durham.ca/falls)



# The Flu and You: How to stay healthy during flu season

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Influenza (the flu) is a serious respiratory illness that is caused by a virus. It can lead to severe illness and complications which may result in hospitalization or death. People with chronic medical problems, pregnant women, children and seniors are at greater risk for flu complications. In Canada, flu season can start as early as October and end as late as May.

The flu spreads easily from person to person by coughing, sneezing and talking. It is also spread through direct contact with unwashed hands or surfaces, such as doorknobs and grocery carts that have been in contact with the flu virus. A person can spread the flu virus before developing symptoms and up to 7 days after getting sick.

## Why Do I Need a Flu Shot Every Year?

Each year, a new flu shot is made because the influenza virus is always changing. The flu shot is for anyone over the age of six months old and is given at your doctor's office and walk-in clinics. The flu shot is also available at participating pharmacies for anyone 5 years of age and older.

For more information on the flu call the Durham Health Connection Line 905-666-6241 or 1-800-841-2729.

[durham.ca/flu](http://durham.ca/flu)





# Simple Steps to Prevent the **Flu** this Season!

Get your flu vaccine every year.



Stay home when you're sick.



Keep common surfaces clean.



Avoid touching your face.



Cough and sneeze into a tissue or your sleeve.



Clean your hands often with soap and water or use hand sanitizer.



# When was your last vaccine? Protect yourself, your kids, and your grandkids



Vaccines are not just for kids and youth. Many adults believe they are fully protected against diseases if they were vaccinated as a child. Did you know that certain diseases, like tetanus and diphtheria, require a booster every ten years?

Unvaccinated caregivers and relatives may be a source of disease to family and friends, especially young children and the elderly. Staying up to date with immunizations protects you and those you spend time with. Reviewing your vaccine record with your health care provider is a great way to learn about diseases you could be at risk for and the vaccines you are eligible to receive.

[durham.ca/immunize](https://durham.ca/immunize)

Your vaccine history, age, health, work, lifestyle and travel habits helps determine which vaccines you need. Some vaccines are publicly funded so they are free at your doctors'. Some of the recommended vaccines that can provide protection against serious disease may have a cost.

Vaccines that you could be eligible for:

- tetanus and diphtheria (Td booster)
- pertussis (whooping cough)
- pneumococcal disease
- herpes zoster (shingles)
- flu

Planning to travel in the near future? If you are traveling to other countries you may need additional vaccines to protect against diseases not found in Canada. Common travel vaccines include:

- hepatitis A and B (Twinrix)
- yellow fever
- typhoid
- cholera
- Japanese encephalitis

The vaccines you will need depend on where you are traveling to. Talk to your health care provider or visit a travel clinic to ensure you are protected against preventable diseases.

Stay up to date on your vaccines to stay healthy and well for you and your family!



# Protect Yourself Against Mosquitoes and West Nile Virus

Spring and summer bring good weather that encourages us to spend time outdoors. Being outdoors exposes us to risks that can seriously affect our health. These risks are often preventable. One of these risks are mosquitoes which carry West Nile Virus.

## What is West Nile Virus?

West Nile virus is spread to people through the bite of an infected mosquito. If infected, most people have mild symptoms like headache, fever, rash and swollen glands. However, some people can develop serious symptoms such as severe headaches, stiff neck, confusion, and swelling of the brain. Young children and older adults are at higher risk for serious symptoms.

## How to protect yourself:

- Limit time outside when mosquitoes are most active – from May to September, between dusk and dawn
- Wear protective clothing such as long pants, long sleeves, shoes, and socks when and where mosquitoes are active. Light-coloured clothing is better as mosquitoes are attracted to dark, bright colours
- Use a DEET-based bug spray on exposed skin or on your outer layer of clothing
- Screen windows and doors to prevent mosquitoes from entering your home

- Drain areas of standing water around your property every few days – especially after a heavy rainfall because mosquitoes breed in standing water

For more information about insect repellents containing DEET, refer to the Government of Canada's Home Page website at <http://www.canada.ca> and use the search word 'DEET'.

For general information about West Nile virus and protection against mosquitoes, call the Durham Region Health Department, Environmental Help Line at 1-888-777-9613 or go to [durham.ca](http://durham.ca)



[durham.ca/westnile](http://durham.ca/westnile)

# Protect Yourself Against Lyme Disease – Get Ticked Off!

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Did you know that enjoying activities such as camping, walking, and golfing in forested areas can expose you to ticks that carry Lyme disease?

## What is Lyme Disease?

Lyme disease is caused by a bacterium that is carried and spread by certain types of ticks. Ticks feed on animal blood to complete the various stages of their life cycle. In Ontario, only blacklegged (“deer”) ticks carry Lyme disease.

## How do people come into contact with ticks?

People come into contact with ticks in forest areas. Ticks shelter in dead leaves and then climb to the tips of tall grasses and low bushes to wait to attach to animals as they brush past. Ticks usually feed on small rodents, birds and deer, but they will also attach themselves to people who are out walking, hunting, golfing, camping, fishing, etc.

## What to do if you find a tick attached to a person:

- Using tweezers, grasp the tick’s head as close to the skin as possible
- Pull straight up slowly, making sure to remove the mouth parts from the skin
- Wash the bite with soap and water then disinfect it with alcohol or a household skin antiseptic
- Save the live tick in a container and take it to your doctor or local health department to be sent for identification and potential testing

Anyone bitten by a tick should visit their health care provider to see if they should be tested for Lyme disease.

**WARNING:** Anyone bitten by a tick, or showing signs of Lyme disease after spending time in a forested area, should visit their health care provider to see if they should be tested for Lyme disease.

## How to protect against ticks and Lyme disease:

- Wear light-coloured clothing – ticks are more visible against light backgrounds
- Check people and pets after spending time outdoors in forested areas
- Stick to open trails in forests – avoid contact with shrubs, tall grasses and piles of dead leaves
- Wear long sleeved tops and long pants. For extra protection, tuck pants into socks
- Use a bug repellent containing DEET, after reading the manufacturer’s instructions

For more information about Lyme disease and ticks, contact the Durham Region Environmental Help Line at 1-888-777-9613, or check our website at [durham.ca](http://durham.ca) and use the search words ‘Lyme Disease’.

You can also access the Government of Canada’s Home Page website at [www.canada.ca](http://www.canada.ca) and use the search words ‘Lyme Disease’.





# Staying Connected

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Did you know that making time to connect with friends and family is good for your mental health? Having good mental health is important as it helps us get the most out of life. Throughout life there are changes and transitions that can impact our mental health in positive and negative ways. As we age, we experience many changes in our roles and relationships. Some of these changes may be positive such as becoming a grandparent. Others may be challenging such as changes in health. Having social connections with friends and family helps us manage stress and can increase enjoyment in life.

Here are some tips to help you stay connected:

- Volunteer in the community and help others
- Get involved in local activities and share your talents
- Maintain friendships and relationships with family
- Get healthy and active with others

## Try one of these ideas:

Become a Volunteer Visitor  
Join a club that interests you  
Try a new sport like aqua fit  
Join an activity at a local seniors centre  
Try a new sport like lawn bowling  
Join a walking club  
Participate in activities at the community centre  
Offer to help a neighbour  
Provide one on one support to a person in need  
Walk in the mall with a friend  
Explore a trail  
Join a book club  
Volunteer in the community  
Participate in activities at the library  
Support a friend  
Try a new sport like curling  
Meet a friend for coffee  
Take a class to learn a new skill or hobby  
Volunteer with Meals on Wheels  
Help a friend get to an appointment  
Throw a tea party



**HEALTH  
DEPARTMENT**

For more information on any article  
in this newsletter please contact  
Durham Health Connection Line at  
905-668-2020 or toll free 1-800-841-2729  
Monday to Friday 9:00 am - 5:00 pm  
You might also access this resource online at  
**[durham.ca/feelinggood](http://durham.ca/feelinggood)**

If you require this information in an accessible format,  
contact 1-800-841-2729

