

## Niagara Region Public Health School Health Newsletter

### March 2024

#### Nutrition Month 2024

March is [Nutrition Month](#)! This annual campaign has been created by the [Dietitians of Canada](#) to highlight the importance of making informed food choices and developing both balanced eating and physical activity habits. Adults have a unique opportunity to help youth learn that healthy eating is more than the foods they eat. Below are some helpful resources to encourage healthy behaviours in children.



- [Building Healthy Eating Habits](#) | [Support Your Picky Eater](#)
- Visit [unlockfood.ca](https://unlockfood.ca) for recipes, food allergies, [menu planners](#), and to also find a Dietitian
- Check out this [free downloadable e-recipe](#) book from a previous Nutrition Month
- For more support around healthy eating, visit [Healthy eating for parents and children - Canada's Food Guide](#)

#### World Sleep Day, Sleep is Essential for Health – March 15<sup>th</sup>

Sleep is very important for physical and mental health, but many children and youth just don't get enough. Lack of sleep may cause a number of health problems and have a big impact on your child's school performance, behaviour and mental health.



**How much sleep does my child/youth need?**

AGE	RECOMMENDED SLEEP
Ages 3-5 (Preschoolers)	10-13 hours per day
Age 6-12	9-12 hours per day
Ages 13-18	9-10 hours a night

Source: Recommended amount of sleep for pediatric populations, from the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, 2016

**Here are a few tips to consider that may help youth sleep better:**

- **Limit naps** – some kids are really tired when they get home from school. A short nap can be helpful, but long naps can interfere with nighttime sleep. Consider keeping after school naps short, no more than 30-60 minutes.
- **Spend at least 1.5 hours outside during daylight hours** – natural light from outside helps set the body's internal clock. This is also important for helping a child's eyes develop properly and prevent nearsightedness.
- **Have an electronic curfew** – it can be helpful to have any electronic screens turned off 1-2 hours before bed. Avoiding screens will reduce blue light and help the brain produce melatonin, a hormone that controls the sleep-wake cycles.

- **Have a regular bedtime routine** – typical routines can include brushing teeth, having a bath or shower, putting on pajamas, going to the bedroom and doing relaxing activities such as reading, drawing, writing, or listening to calming music.

For more information, visit [caringforkids.ca](https://caringforkids.ca) - [healthy sleep](#)

Source: <https://www.cheo.on.ca/en/resources-and-support/resources/P5643E.pdf>

## Niagara Parents

Public Health Nurses are available to answer questions and provide reliable advice about pregnancy, nutrition for all ages, child or parental mental health concerns, and provide connections to community supports through [Niagara Parents](#).



Individuals can connect with a Public Health Nurse at [Niagara Parents](#)

**Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:15 p.m.:**

- Call 905-684-7555 or 1-888-505-6074 ext.7555
- [Email](#)
- [Live Chat](#)
- [Facebook Messenger](#)

## Active School Travel



Walking home from school can take less time than driving. This is especially true if you must arrive early for a parking spot. If you live too far away to walk all the way to school, try driving to a location near your school and walk the rest of the way.

Here are benefits and fun facts about Active School Travel:

- It only takes about 12 minutes to walk 1 kilometre. Try walking to school or a destination near your home. You might surprise yourself with how fast you get there.
- More people walking means fewer cars and less congestion. This makes it safer for everyone. Cars actually drive slower when there are large numbers of people walking.
- Kids who walk or bike to school arrive alert and ready to learn. Practice a walking route to your school to help your child get ready for an active return.



## Educational Resources

### Transform Your Classroom with Conversation Cards

Ignite meaningful dialogue and create a supportive community with School Mental Health's new conversation starters! Designed to boost mental health self-care, social-emotional skills, and reduce stigma, these cards empower students to thrive.

Visit <https://smho-smso.ca/online-resources/class-conversation-starters/> and join School Mental Health Ontario in fostering wellness and equity in our classrooms!



### Nutrition Month

- OPHEA has partnered with *Growing Chefs! Ontario* to provide lesson plans related to Healthy Eating for grades one to eight – [Lesson Plans by Growing Chefs! Ontario](#)
- Teach youth [how to read a nutrition facts label](#). As part of the lesson, ask students to bring in nutrition labels from home. Spend some time with youth reading labels and comparing information.



### International Women Day – Inspire Inclusion



March 8th is [International Women's Day](#). This day is to recognize and celebrate women and girls' social, economic, cultural, and political achievements. There are many great ways to keep the conversation going within your class!

- [Women of Impact in Canada](#) – learn about the inspiring achievements of Canadian women in various fields such as politics, sciences, and the arts.
- Government of Canada's [Teacher Toolkit](#) – learn more about celebrating International Women's Day in the classroom!
- [Engaged, Spark and Lead](#) – topics and activities suitable for grades four through 12.
- The [International Women's Day Toolkit](#) – resources to ensure International Women's Day is impactful and engaging.