



Annual Report

Renfrew County and
District Health Unit

2011

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Who we are...

Renfrew County and District Health Unit delivers public health programs and services within our borders, in collaboration with other organizations in the health system and in partnership with local, provincial and national organizations.

We are a non-profit agency governed by the Renfrew County and District Board of Health. We are funded by the Government of Ontario, the County of Renfrew, the City of Pembroke and the Township of South Algonquin. Our approximately 70 staff members serve over 100,000 people living in an area of 15,000 square kilometers.

Dr. Michael Corriveau
Medical Officer of Health

Early detection and management of respiratory infections saves lives!

18 respiratory outbreaks were declared in long-term care homes and retirement homes

Long Term Care (LTC) Homes and Retirement Homes are places where any one of our loved ones or ourselves may live as we grow older.

Staff at these homes know that when residents begin to experience symptoms of a respiratory illness they need to respond quickly, as respiratory infections are easily spread and can lead to complications and even death. Caring for ill residents requires skillful management, and the Health Unit is mandated to help.

LTC and Retirement Homes report to the Health Unit as soon as two residents experience respiratory symptoms within a 48-hour period. When we receive a report, Public Health Nurse Colleen Musclow responds. Colleen offers to assist staff at the Home in their efforts to prevent the spread of the illness. When a respiratory outbreak is officially declared, Colleen reports required information to the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Colleen offers to meet with staff at their Respiratory Outbreak Management meeting. She discusses the collection of samples to be sent to a lab to identify the illness, and completes with staff a checklist of measures that need to be in place to manage the outbreak.

“Every respiratory outbreak is different,” commented Colleen. “It’s important to evaluate each one to learn from our experiences and prepare for the next one, so that we can continue to be effective in protecting the health of loved ones.”

Chlamydia infections are increasing

244 cases of Chlamydia were reported in 2011, up from 154 in 2010
86% of people infected were between the ages of 15 and 29

The Health Unit is responsible for tracking and controlling the spread of over 50 infectious diseases that must be reported to us for follow-up. Of these diseases, Chlamydia is of particular concern because the number of cases has increased markedly over the past 10 years, both locally and across Ontario.

Chlamydia is a sexually transmitted infection that is spread from person to person through unprotected oral, anal or vaginal intercourse.

Chlamydia is treatable with an antibiotic, but if left untreated it can lead to serious health problems and sterility. Since people infected with Chlamydia often have no symptoms, they can pass it on to sexual partners without realizing it.

People who are [at risk of getting Chlamydia](#) should get tested every year for sexually transmitted infections even if they feel well. Reduce the risk of Chlamydia by not having sex or getting tested with every new partner before having sex and always using condoms.

Creating Supportive Environments

Making healthy choices the easy choices for students

Poor eating habits can have lasting effects on children's health, learning and school performance. Well-nourished children are more likely to get the energy they need to grow, be active, stay healthy and do well at school.

The [Healthy School Nutrition Environment Campaign](#) brought together members of school communities to take action on creating a culture that values and supports healthy eating.

We launched the campaign in October at St. James Catholic School (Eganville), Our Lady of Fatima Catholic School (Renfrew), Sherwood Public School (Barry's Bay) and Champlain Discovery Public School (Pembroke).

"A healthy nutrition environment exists when a school promotes healthy eating for students through words *and* actions," said Carolyn Froats-Emond, Registered Dietitian, who spearheaded the campaign.

"The Ministry of Education's School Food and Beverage Policy, which was introduced in January 2010, is part of creating a healthy nutrition environment," explained Carolyn. "Other ways that schools can reinforce healthy eating include: offering healthy choices at the school breakfast program or for classroom celebrations and sporting events; fundraising with oranges instead of chocolate bars; using stickers or extra gym time instead of candy to reward behaviour; and sharing tips on packing healthy lunches and snacks with parents."

Campaign activities included distributing print resources to area schools. A series of radio and newspaper advertisements urged community members to support healthy eating in schools. Health Unit staff presented to school councils, worked with individual schools to identify priority areas for change, and facilitated action planning.

The Healthy School Nutrition Environment Campaign was supported by the Renfrew County District School Board, the Renfrew County Catholic District School Board, a local physician, Champlain Cardiovascular Disease Prevention Network, KidActive and Renfrew County Food for Learning.

Active transportation moves ahead

The Health Unit promoted active transportation by participating in the drafting of an [Active Transportation Strategy](#) for Renfrew County. We also engaged two schools in [School Travel Planning](#), which encourages more children to walk and wheel safely to school.

Helping Families

Promoting safe use of child car seats

Child car seats can save lives. However, most are not used properly. That's why the Health Unit is a member of the Renfrew County Car Seat Safety Coalition and the Eastern Ontario Car Seat Coalition. Together, we promote the proper use of child car seats.

In 2011 the Health Unit sponsored a technician training course and a refresher training for previously trained technicians. These technicians from other community organizations provide car seat inspections for parents and caregivers throughout the year.

Public Health Nurses and Home Visitors provide car seat safety education at [prenatal classes](#), [home visits](#), [Child Health Clinics](#), [Well Baby Drop-ins](#) and Prenatal Nutrition Program sessions.

15 car seat inspector technicians were trained and 6 previously trained technicians received refresher training

Call it what it is!

The **No More Accidents** communication campaign was an effort to change the language we use to describe injuries and their causes. Communication materials declared, "No more ACCIDENTS! Call it what it is...injury, collision, incident or crash."

"Changing the language we use can help people understand that injuries CAN be prevented," said Health Promoter Jen Dykxhoorn, who worked on the campaign.

The campaign aimed to raise awareness that referring to an injury-causing event as an 'accident' is both misleading and inappropriate. This will help us shift our attention to the causes of injuries, and focus on strategies for preventing them.

Campaign promotions included letters, media releases, pens and magnets distributed to workplaces and media outlets

May was Medicine Clean Out month

The **Medicine Clean Out** campaign encouraged people to return expired, leftover and unlabelled medications to a participating pharmacy or household hazardous waste depot for safe and free disposal. It also increased awareness that medicine is hazardous waste and should not be thrown in the garbage or flushed down the toilet.

Renfrew County and District Health Unit staff planned and implemented the annual campaign with the Renfrew County Injury Prevention Committee for Older Adults. Promotional materials were distributed to health care providers and participating pharmacies, and advertisements were placed in all local newspapers.

Residents returned over 250 bags of medication during Medicine Clean Out month

Helping the Community

Engaging youth in issues important to them

Youth engagement means amplifying young people's voices and leadership, creating safe spaces where they can discuss issues that affect their lives and take action.

Youth engagement is about empowering all youth as valued partners in addressing issues that affect them personally and/or are important to them. Health Units across Ontario are using youth engagement as a strategy to support the development of healthy behaviours.

In 2011, we carried out several [youth engagement](#) activities:

- Provided support to three high schools to plan and implement Youth Engagement Healthy Schools Initiatives.
- Provided [Engagement in Action](#) training from the [Youth Advocacy Training Institute](#). 35 staff from local health and social service organizations learned about the youth development approach and how to engage youth in health promotion efforts.
- Provided [Influencing Public Policy](#) training from the Youth Advocacy Training Institute. 14 youth participated.
- Carried out the local component of the East Region Tobacco Control Area Network's [Photovoice](#) project. Youth in Renfrew County and District submitted over 80 photos depicting a health and wellness issue that mattered to them. Photos and narratives were displayed in public places.

Indoor walking is popular

[Get W.I.T.H. It! \(Walking in the Halls\)](#) has been a popular way for Renfrew County and District residents to stay physically active during the winter months. This indoor walking program operates at six area high schools and Mirimichi Lodge.

Get W.I.T.H. It! was developed by StepsCount in partnership with community organizations in Renfrew County and District in 2006. Since then we have responded to numerous requests from organizations across Canada that are interested in replicating the program.

Get W.I.T.H. It! is a partnership between the Health Unit, StepsCount, Renfrew County District School Board, Renfrew County Catholic District School Board, Renfrew County Paramedic Service, University of Ottawa Heart Institute, Physical Activity Network Renfrew County and community volunteers.

Over 1,000 people of all ages and abilities participated in Get W.I.T.H. It!

Protecting Renfrew County and District

Safe Food Program

- 1,349 routine inspections of food premises
- 206 re-inspections to ensure corrective actions were taken
- 31 complaints investigated
- 75 food-related inspections at special events
- 23 food safety courses resulted in 458 people certified as Safe Food Handlers
- 6 food recall inspections completed

Safe Water Program

- 455 compliance inspections of water systems
- 55 adverse water results from regulated systems investigated
- 19 boil water orders/drinking water advisories issued
- 6,500 private water samples submitted to the provincial laboratory through the Health Unit
- 222 inquiries due to private water sample results
- 1,590 recreational beach samples collected from 24 beaches and 1 beach posted as unsafe for swimming

Small Drinking Water Systems

- 116 compliance inspections
- 122 directives issued
- 39 adverse water incidents investigated and 4 boil water orders issued

Rabies Control

- 195 animal bites investigated
- 13 people received post-exposure rabies prophylaxis

Immunization Program

- 93% of grade 7 students immunized against Hepatitis B
- 59% of grade 8 girls immunized against Human Papillomavirus (HPV)
- 6,069 doses of flu vaccine given at community clinics
- 29,360 doses of flu vaccine distributed to physician's offices, hospitals, long-term care homes, retirement homes, health care agencies, workplaces, and community health centres
- 82 inspections conducted on vaccine storage and handling practices in health care provider premises

Sexually Transmitted and Blood-Borne Infections

- 244 confirmed cases of Chlamydia, 16 confirmed cases of hepatitis C and 7 confirmed cases of gonorrhea investigated

Sexual Health

- 1,505 client visits at 11 clinic locations; 55 pregnancy tests carried out
- 34,500 condoms distributed

Harm Reduction Program

- 25,170 clean needles distributed, and an estimated 20,975 used needles collected

Protecting Renfrew County and District

Health Hazard Investigations

- 30 indoor air quality complaints investigated
- 8 sewage complaints investigated
- 13 insect complaints investigated
- 6 rodent complaints investigated
- 8 housing complaints investigated

Enforcement of the Smoke Free Ontario Act

- 12 charges laid by the Health Unit under the Smoke Free Ontario Act
- 183 worksites inspected for compliance with the Act
- 605 tobacco vendor inspections completed
- 190 enforcement checks using test shoppers completed

Rabies prevention and control

Rabies is a very serious viral disease that is transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected mammal. It is typically fatal if a person is infected with the virus and treatment does not begin soon enough.

Renfrew County and District Health Unit is responsible for carrying out the provincial [Rabies Prevention and Control Protocol](#). The purpose of this Protocol is to prevent human cases of rabies. Health Unit activities under this Protocol include:

- Monitoring the incidence of rabies-positive animals in Renfrew County
- Developing and maintaining a Rabies Contingency Plan
- Investigating human exposures to animals suspected of having rabies
- Maintaining a supply of anti-rabies vaccine
- Assisting physicians in deciding when to give the vaccine to people who have been exposed to animals suspected of having rabies

“When an animal bite is reported to the Health Unit, the incident is investigated by a Public Health Inspector who orders the biting animal into quarantine for 10 days”, explained Mike Grace, Coordinator in the Environmental Health Division. “If the virus was present in the mouth of the animal at the time of the bite, signs of rabies would show up in the animal within 10 days. The animal is assessed at the end of the quarantine period and if it is free of rabies symptoms, we can conclude that the animal was not infected at the time of the bite.”

In 2011, 195 animal bites or other exposures were reported to the Health Unit for follow-up. Of these incidents, 13 people were treated with anti-rabies vaccine at the request of their physician.

If an animal bites you or if potentially infectious material such as saliva enters your eyes, nose, mouth or open wound, you should wash the area with soap and water immediately. Seek medical attention as soon as possible and make sure the Health Unit is contacted.

2011 Board of Health

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 Mayor Jennifer Murphy
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2011 Financial Statements

Please see [Financial Statements of Renfrew County and District Health Unit, Year ended December 31, 2011](#). (PDF, 17 pages, 770 KB)

Contact us...

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