

BOARD OF HEALTH Quarterly Report

ACTIVITIES OF THE LEEDS, GRENVILLE & LANARK DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

December 2005 - February 2006



Why Handwashing Is Important During Flu Season

By Dr. Sheela Basrur, Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health

Handwashing, when done correctly, is the single most effective way to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

Follow these four simple steps to keep hands clean:

- Wet your hands with warm running water.
- Add soap, and rub your hands together, making a soapy lather. Do this away from the running water for at least 15 seconds, and do not wash the lather away. Wash the front and back of your hands, as well as between your fingers and under your nails.
- Rinse your hands well under warm running water. Let the water run back into the sink, not down your elbows. Turn off the water with a paper towel and place it in the garbage.
- Dry hands thoroughly with a clean towel.
- Wash your hands as described above at least 5 times a day.

There is more to handwashing than you think. By rubbing your hands vigorously with soapy water, you pull the dirt and the oily soils free from your skin. The soap lather suspends both the dirt and germs trapped inside then gets quickly washed away.

Here are some common mistakes to avoid when handwashing:

- DON'T use a single damp cloth to wash a group of children's hands.
- DON'T use a standing basin of water to rinse hands.
- DON'T use a common hand towel. Always use disposable towels in daycare or food preparation settings.
- DON'T use sponges or non-disposable cleaning cloths, unless you launder them using detergent on a regular basis. Remember that germs thrive on moist surfaces.

Supervision is an essential element in forming good handwashing habits in children. Children learn by example. Let them observe good handwashing techniques from their adult caregivers.

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What Is Pandemic Influenza ?

Submitted by Jane Fletcher, R.N., B.A., M.A., Director of Clinical Services

The word Pandemic comes from the Greek *pandemos* meaning “of all the people”. Today, it is used to describe a disease that affects or attacks the population of a large region, usually world-wide.

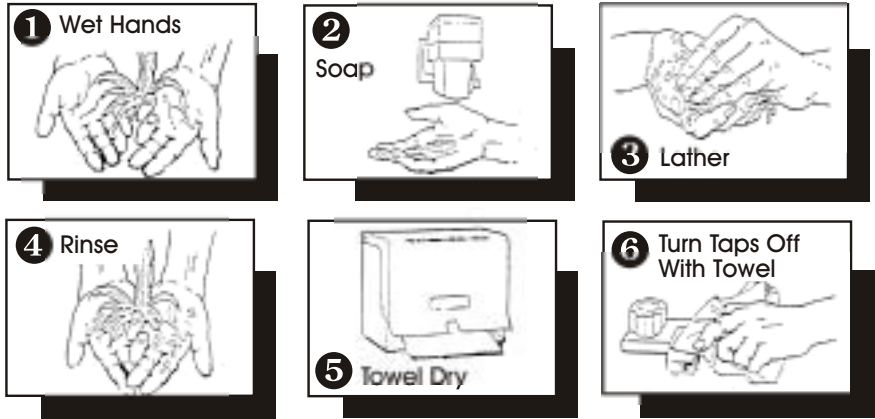
There have been other epidemics in the twentieth century: Small Pox, Tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS in Africa and other developing countries.

Pandemic Influenza has occurred four times in the past 90 years. The Spanish Flu in 1918-1919 when half of the world population was infected and resulted in 20 to 40 million deaths. The Asian Flu in 1957, the Hong Kong Flu in 1968 and the Swine Flu in 1976 each resulted in about 1 million deaths. There have been more recent scares: the “Avian Flu”, the H5N1 Avian virus was first identified in people in 1997, in Hong Kong. It was thought that the virus had been eradicated until it was found again in February 2003 in Asia. This is the virus that has the world watching.

All species of animals and fowl have influenza viruses that cause illness in their own populations. These viruses normally do not cross the barrier to another species. A Pandemic Influenza virus arises when a virus “normal” to one species “learns” to infect and transmit easily in the human population.

The ideal environment for a virus to “learn” this information is when a person or animal (usually pigs) is infected by a “human” influenza virus and another influenza virus, at the same time. This mixing of viruses usually happens in geographic areas, where people and livestock and fowl live in close proximity to each other.

WASH YOUR HANDS



The Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District Health Unit
Call Brockville 345-5685 Smiths Falls 283-2740 or 1-800-660-5853

One way to prevent this from happening is to decrease the amount of influenza in the human population through immunization and good hygienic practices. The World Health Organization and other international aid organizations have increased their presence and are making influenza immunization more available to some of the poorer regions in the world.

The thought of a pandemic influenza is daunting. An important thing to remember is that a pandemic influenza virus is similar to all influenza viruses in its behavior. This means that it is transmitted person to person by droplets, by having someone cough or sneeze in your face, or by touching a surface that someone has touched after coughing or sneezing, then touching your eyes, nose

or mouth. The virus can live up to 48 hours on any surface.

This is the reason why health officials stress the importance of hand washing.

If you don't have easy access to soap and water for hand washing, an alcohol based hand sanitizer is the next best thing. Wash your hands frequently during the day, wash your hands when you come home from work, school, shopping and before you put your shopping away. Wash your hands before you prepare food or before you eat. Just this simple act can lower the likelihood of catching influenza. It will also reduce the number of colds you may get this winter.

Next Article:
Are we prepared in Leeds, Grenville and Lanark Counties?



ERIN 2004 Achievement Report Summary

Submitted by Julie Ingleby RN, BScN, Public Health Nurse

The Eastern Region Injury Network's (ERIN) 2004 Achievement Report has just been released! It encapsulates the numerous initiatives and events that were completed during the year. ERIN is a network comprised of injury prevention stakeholders in Eastern Ontario whose purpose is to facilitate collaboration and communication in order to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of injury prevention programs in Eastern Ontario. The network works to develop consensus on consistent messages to be used in local programming and to promote the use of best practices and evaluation. The Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District Health Unit has been an active member of the Network since its inception in 2000.

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ERIN continues to provide an opportunity for sharing information, building community capacity, identifying issues and confirming regional priorities regarding intentional and unintentional injury. For more information, visit the website <http://www.plan-itsafe.com/ERIN> or contact Julie Ingleby RN, BScN, Public Health Nurse at (613) 283-2740.

Exciting achievements during 2004 included:

- The **Promotion of ERIN** at the Ontario Injury Prevention Conference in February 2004 where promotional cards were distributed at a display.
- **ERIN Annual Networking and Education Day** on March 31st, 2004. The theme this year was "Road Safety" which linked perfectly with the World Health Organization's (WHO) "World Health Day". WHO designates a day annually in order to raise awareness about specific issues, which was "Road Safety is No Accident" on April 7th, 2004. Approximately 60 persons participated in the ERIN event.
- **ERIN Early Years Home Safety Challenge** was a campaign developed to increase the knowledge and awareness of childhood injuries in South Eastern Ontario communities. **The key messages were:**
 - Injuries are the leading cause of death and disability for children under 6;
 - Supervision is the best method of prevention;
 - Making changes to your home prevents injuries.

The Challenge was presented at the National Safe Community Conference and there was also a poster presentation at the Ontario Injury Prevention Conference.
- **Evaluation and Data Analysis Workshop** was held in August 2004, which explored the planning process and outcome evaluation from the data perspective. The workshop was evaluated and was a success.
- **Medicine Cleanout Campaign** focused on reducing falls in the elderly and poisoning in children due to inappropriate use and/or storage of medicines. 2004 marked the third consecutive year for the campaign which again was implemented in November to coincide with the "National Senior Safety Week" and the "Provincial Drug Awareness Week". Most local pharmacies participated by providing the service of safe disposal of medicines. 91 pharmacies partnered with ERIN for the campaign and over 1,391 bags of expired or unused medication were returned.
- **Safety Gift List** project that was initiated in 2003 was completed and disseminated. It provides numerous safety items for people looking for gift ideas. The list is available through the ERIN website or in pamphlet form and is entitled "Looking for Something Different? – Take Me Shopping With You..." This resource has been well received by the community.

Injury Prevention Summer Program Fall 2005

Submitted by Lois Dewey, BScN, RN, Public Health Nurse, Early Years, Injury Prevention

During the summer of 2005, the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit presented an Injury Prevention Summer Program. Post-secondary students delivered this program to children in our communities

who ranged in age from two to twelve years. Summer safety messages were delivered through a number of age appropriate interactive activities.

Day cares, kindergartens, day camps, community festivals/fairs and

sports camps were the sites for the presentations. The target group was split into two age groups, two to six year olds and seven to twelve year olds.

The two to six year olds participated in an interactive puppet show. The messages included bike, sun, water, pedestrian safety and poison prevention. Circle time activities were developed and delivered to reinforce these safety messages. Letters to care givers, safety based colouring books and pamphlets were sent home to families to build on the messages that were introduced that day.

The seven to twelve year olds participated in a number of interactive activities including: the wheel of safety, capture the safety gear game and the development of 'infomercials'. The safety messages delivered through these activities were: fire and burn prevention, water/sun safety, bike and pedestrian safety and home safety. Letters to care givers, activity books, sun crunchers, erasers and sun safety stickers were distributed at the end of each session. These resources expanded on the messages that were introduced that day.

The Cost of Food

Submitted by Dianne Oickle, MSc, RD, Public Health Nutritionist

Cost of food has increased more than 16% over the past seven years in the Tri-county

According to the most recent Nutritious Food Basket survey, the average cost of feeding a family of four is \$533.89 per month, compared to \$460.67 per month seven years ago. This is a substantial increase of 16% since 1998. For the eighth consecutive year, the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit has calculated the cost of the **Nutritious Food Basket (NFB)**. The results of the NFB are used to estimate the cost of eating healthy for any population group. It is often used specifically to highlight issues around poverty, access to food (food security), and the challenges of eating healthy on a limited income.

The **Food Access Inventories** for Leeds and Grenville united counties and Lanark county have been updated. These inventories describe programs available in the Tri-county to help residents and their families access food. Some types of programs listed include: food banks, community kitchens, Meals on Wheels and the Good Food Box.

The Health Unit is implementing an **Access to Healthy Food Media Campaign** during November – December 2005. The goal of the campaign is to increase awareness of the rising cost of food and the difficulties faced by our residents to access adequate food. In addition to the campaign, the NFB results, food security resources, a report on poverty and food security in the Tri-county, and the updated Food Access Inventories will be mailed to community partners, municipalities, service providers, and community organizations. This information will help them refer clients to services to access food and support agencies to advocate for our low-income residents.

Dietitians at the Leeds, Grenville, and Lanark District Health Unit are working to educate the public about the cost of healthy eating, and to identify services that are available to help people access healthy foods.

The Health Unit is also working with community partners to address food security concerns in the Tri-county. The Health Unit also has a number of resources for community members and service providers that can help people have access to healthy foods.

The program reached:

- **693** children during 39 presentations at daycares
- **548** children during 19 presentations at day camps
- **446** children and **237** parents were reached at 11 festivals

Feedback forms indicated a high level of satisfaction with the presentations and a strong interest in having this Injury Prevention Program delivered in the future.