

Niagara Region Public Health School Health Newsletter

October 2023

WALKTOBER

As the rush of the new school year starts to settle down, consider walking, biking or rolling with your child to school.



Join families across Niagara and the world in celebrating October's [International Walk to School Month](#) (Walktober). Kids who walk or bike to school arrive alert and ready to learn. If you live too far away to walk or wheel to school, try driving to a location near your school and walk the rest of the way. Using active transportation helps reduce congestion at your school.

This Walktober, enjoy **#ActiveSchoolTravel** and leave the car at home more often **@NiagaraParents @OntarioAST @NiagaraSTS**

Don't Be Scared by Cavities this Halloween!

Keep your child's smile BOO-tiful this Halloween!

Here are some tips to help keep teeth healthy:

- Brush teeth twice a day for two minutes using fluoridated toothpaste
- Floss once a day
- Stay away from sticky, starchy and hard candy
- Limit sugary drinks. Drink water after eating tasty treats to rinse away sugar that may be stuck on your teeth.
- Book a FREE dental appointment at Public Health's dental clinics by calling 905-688-8248 or 1-888-505-6074 ext. 7399 or [live chat with us](#).



To learn more on how to keep your family's teeth healthy, visit www.niagararegion.ca/dental.

Mental Illness Awareness Week 2023 #MIAW

This year, [Mental Illness Awareness Week](#) is from October 1-7. Mental Illness Awareness Week is an annual national public education campaign designed to help open the eyes of Canadians to the reality of mental illness.

Annual Memorial Forest Vigil:

The [Memorial Forest](#) seeks to reduce the stigma around mental illness and promote a greater understanding and compassion from the community as a whole. Each year, a Memorial Forest Vigil is held during Mental Illness Awareness Week to provide an opportunity to share stories of hope and success as told by individuals and family members living with mental illness.

Mental Illness and Stigma:

Stigma is when someone views you in a negative way because you have a distinctive characteristic or personal trait that is thought to be a disadvantage (a negative stereotype). Stigma can occur from a lack of understanding of mental illness. This stigma can lead to discrimination, and it may be direct or unintentional.

Some of the harmful effects of stigma can include:

- Hesitancy to get help or treatment
- Lack of understanding by family, friends or others
- Fewer opportunities for work, school or social activities
- Bullying, physical violence or harassment
- The belief that you'll never succeed at certain challenges or that you can't improve your situation

You can help reduce stigma by educating yourself, being aware of your attitudes and behaviours and choosing your words carefully when you talk about mental illness and substance use disorders.

Helpful Resources:

- [Addressing Stigma](#)
- [Canadian Mental Health Association: Stigma and Discrimination](#)
- [Words Matter \(CAMH\)](#)

Help Keep the Classroom Germ Free – Stay Home When Sick

Fall brings the ‘unofficial’ start of respiratory illness season. This means that viruses that affect our respiratory system (for example our lungs and throat) begin to spread more often.

Help keep the classroom germ free by keeping your child home if they are sick. If your child is sick, they should stay home from school until:

- ✓ They have no fever, without the use of fever reducing medication **and**
- ✓ Their symptoms have been improving for at least 24 hours or 48 hours if they have nausea, vomiting and / or diarrhea **and**
- ✓ They don’t develop any new symptoms

Like every year, different respiratory viruses can be spreading in our community at the same time. These viruses can have similar symptoms. This means it can be hard to tell what you are infected with based on just symptoms alone.



By keeping your child home when sick, you help prevent them from spreading whatever infection they have to others.



Educational Resources

Asthma Friendly Schools

Back to school and the fall weather play a big part in an increase in asthma hospitalizations and every year. For support in creating asthma friendly environments, check-out [Ophea's free asthma resources](#), including the e-Learning module available for all school staff: [Implementing Ryan's Law and PPM 161: Ensuring Asthma Friendly Schools](#).