



## Promoting Health and Preventing Chronic Disease in Children and Families: What Parents, Practitioners and Decision Makers Can Do For Their Community

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## What is the OCDPA?

The Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance (OCDPA), formed in 2003, is a collaborative of health-related organizations that came together to focus on chronic disease prevention and healthy living in a comprehensive manner.

The OCDPA envisions healthy Ontarians and Ontario communities where populations and individual health are supported by healthy societal policies, practices and conditions.



The Need for Chronic Disease Prevention:

## Chronic Disease Burden in Ontario



## Chronic Disease is... Ontario's Issue

- Based on self-reports: about 33 % (1 in 3 Ontarians of all ages) have one or more chronic diseases.
- For those over the age of 65 across Canada: about 80 % have one chronic disease, and of those, about 70 % (3 in 4 Ontarians) suffer from two or more chronic diseases.
- At least 60 % of Ontario's health-care costs are due to chronic diseases.

*Ontario Health Quality Council Report (2007)*



## Chronic Disease is... No Longer an Adult Disease

- Poor eating habits in childhood are likely to be carried into adolescents and adulthood
- 3 out of 5 Canadian children are not physically active enough for optimum growth and development
- Canada has one of the highest rates of childhood obesity in the developed world (rank 5<sup>th</sup> of 34 countries)
  - Between 1981 and 1996, obesity rates of children between the ages 7 to 13 year tripled
- Heart disease, asthma, some cancers and type 2 diabetes have seen as much as 10-fold increase in children over the past decade



## Individual Behaviour and Chronic Disease Common Risk Factors





## Risk Conditions: Social Determinants

Changes to social, physical and economic conditions have an impact on our health, through:

- Shifts in social/cultural norms (e.g. preference for fast foods)
- Impact on built environment (e.g. lack of sidewalks or bike paths)
- Environmental contaminant load and exposure (e.g. exposure to pollutants)
- Greater Income gaps between rich-poor (e.g. poverty)

Health inequities are the consequence of the above issues and are results of policy decisions (or lack of policy decisions) from previous governments



## Social Determinants Influence... Access and Availability

For example, access to healthy foods is out of reach for many Canadians. Reasons relate more to social and environmental conditions:

- Lack of money – leading to food insecurity
- Lack of food preparation skills – due to education
- Lack of time – due to issues with work-life balance

Availability may influence accessibility to healthy foods:

- Lack of healthy foods available – due to the built environment; transportation issues; poor community planning; and/or urban sprawl



## Social Determinants... Why so Important?

- In 2004, almost 325,000 individuals visited Ontario food banks
  - 54% of these reported Social Assistance as their primary source of income
- 50% of the Canadian children living in poverty reside in Ontario
- More sedentary lifestyles are noted among socially disadvantaged and marginalized groups



Promoting Health and Preventing Chronic Disease

## Things to Consider...



## Which policy would promote healthy children?

Providing children with healthy food in school



Providing HPV vaccines to young girls



## Which policy would support chronic disease prevention in Ontario?

Tackling Obesity



Tackling Air Pollution



## Which issue impacts on chronic disease risk?

The Built Environment



Income and Employment



## Who can influence policy advancement in the community/Ontario?

Politicians



YOU



Recommendations for Action

## What YOU can do...



## What parents can do...

- Know the issues that affect you and your neighbours. Talk about them openly!
- Be engaged in the organizations and institutions in your neighbourhood, for example: schools, childcare programs, recreation facilities.
- Contact your local city councillor, M.P.P or M.P., and let them know about the issues you find most important!
- Be an advocate for your child(ren) and community!



## What practitioners can do...

- Learn about the issues affecting the families and children in your area by speaking and listening to parents. Ask them how you can assist!
- Share reports, resources and information. Bring attention to the broader issues within your staff team and organization!
- Collaborate and link with other service providers in your area that may have an interest in taking action!
- Speak or write to your city councillor, M.P.P or M.P.!



## What decision makers can do...

- Keep abreast of the broader issues affecting the families and residents in your community!
- Read up on the issues; discuss with your colleagues!
- Link with other organizations to partner with or work together to act on the issues at hand!
- Contact, write letters and meet with your city councillor, M.P.P and M.P. about the issue. Bring 'voters' from your community for support!
- Advocate; address the issues; take action through policy and program implementation!



The Road to Preventing Chronic Diseases

## Final Note



## Key Policy Areas to Consider

### Risk Factors

- Physical Inactivity
- Unhealthy Eating
- Tobacco Use
- High Risk Alcohol Consumption
- Stress and mental health
- Others

### Risk Conditions

- Healthy child development
- Built environment
- Toxins / Physical Environment
- Poverty
- Social Inclusion
- Health Inequity



## Quote: OCDPA

“Chronic disease can no longer be explained only as an outcome based on engaging in the wrong health behaviours. There is a need to look beyond individual responsibility and understand the ways in which the social environment shaped the decisions we make and the behaviour we engage in.”

Ontario Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance  
*Chronic Disease In Ontario and Canada* (2006)



## Quotes: WHO and Ezzati

“Approaches that address multiple risk factors have the potential to improve overall population health and to increase patient satisfaction and outcomes.”

WHO, *Reducing Risks, Promoting Healthy Life* (2002)

“Information about the effects of **multiple** risk factors has a two-fold benefit for disease prevention through reduction of known risks and by addressing health inequities.”

Ezzati et al. *Estimates of Global Risk*. The Lancet (2003)



## Quote: Dennis Raphael

“The weight of the evidence indicates that social determinants of health

- 1) Have a direct impact on health of individuals and populations,
- 2) Are the best predictors of individual and population health,
- 3) Structure and influence lifestyle choices, and
- 4) Interact with each other to produce health”

*Addressing the SDOH in Canada: Bridging the gap between research findings and health policy*, Policy Options, March 2003



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