

The Community Health Reporter

From the [Community Health & Well-Being in Southwestern Ontario: A Resource for Planning](#) Report
Volume 1, Issue 2

Did you know ...

Residents of Southwestern Ontario, compared to all of Ontario:

- *Eat more fat / Are more overweight*
- *Exercise less*
- *Smoke more*

Why reduce your health risks?

If you eat less fat, exercise regularly and quit smoking, you can reduce your risk for several diseases, including coronary heart disease -- The #1 killer in Southwestern Ontario!

Are you at risk?

In Southwestern Ontario, 92% of males and 88% of females eat "too much fat" daily. The Ontario Ministry of Health recommends that fat should make up 30% or less of our total daily calorie intake.

High fat intake seems to be reflected in the high number of overweight people in Southwestern Ontario -- 33% of males and 24% of females have a Body Mass Index (BMI) greater than 27. This is enough to increase your risk of developing health problems. A healthy BMI is in the range of 20-25. This index applies to persons aged 20-64, excluding pregnant women. To calculate your own BMI use this formula:

$$\text{BMI} = \text{bodyweight}(\text{kg}) / [\text{height}(\text{m})]^2$$



Your Health & Tomorrow's Health Care System

Fact: Southwestern Ontario residents use hospitals more than Ontario residents. Also, Southwestern Ontario has at least 10% higher hospitalization rates for ischemic heart disease, stroke, acute respiratory infections, chronic obstructive lung disease, motor vehicle injuries, abdominal hernia and gallbladder disorders.

Fact: Southwestern Ontario residents do not live as healthy lifestyles as the rest of Ontario. Unhealthy lifestyles are linked to all of the above diseases.

Situation: When the Health Services Restructuring Committee began reforming our health care system, they did not consider a community's illness rate when calculating the number of hospital beds needed for a community. Although this committee's results have been favourable, there are still a large number of hospital beds being eliminated. Furthermore, Southwestern Ontario's higher hospitalization rates and illness rates puts additional strain on the remaining available beds. The impact on our community's needs are continuing to be assessed.

Solution: Reduce your and your community's health risks to help decrease these illnesses, so the demand for services match the available services.

(Divide body weight in kilograms by height in metres squared).

Having an unhealthy body weight increases your risk of developing health problems, such as coronary heart disease and hypertension. Both conditions are high in Southwestern Ontario.

Increasing your intake of fruits and veggies and decreasing high fat goods, such as junk food, can help. Also, try following *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating*.

Get moving!

Physical activity is a major force in preventing and healing health problems. 53% of males and 58% of females in Southwestern Ontario do not exercise regularly at the minimum level (i.e. 15 minutes, 3 or more times per week).

Any activity is good. If you don't exercise regularly, then try to meet the minimum level. Start gradually and follow the tips below. Once you have achieved this level, then you can work your way up!

Plan to be physically active

"The stronger your goal setting skills, the greater your 'staying power' will be." (From Active Living Canada)

Tips

- What is your activity? Choose something you enjoy.
- What are your goals? Focus on the process, not the result.
- With whom ? Pick a partner.
- What time of day is most convenient? Set a schedule.
- How do you stay motivated on a regular basis? Make it regular, yet flexible.
- Do you have any medical considerations? Ask your doctor.

Butt out!

Smoking is a serious risk factor not only for heart disease but for a number of cancers and other health problems. There is a greater percentage of current smokers in Southwestern Ontario compared to Ontario as a whole.

Teen smoking is increasing Ontario-wide with the average



Community resources

There are several community resources you can use to find out more information about the issues discussed in this newsletter.

For general health information, contact your local Health Unit. In the Middlesex-London area, you can contact the [Middlesex-London Health Unit](#) at (519)663-5317.

For smoking information contact London's [Addiction Research Foundation's](#) Information Line at 1-800-463-6273.

For additional information contact [Information London](#) at (519) 432-1105.

[Community Health and Well-being in Southwestern Ontario: A Resource for Planning](#)

To order a full copy of the report please contact:

[Population and Community Health Unit](#)

The Gordon J. Mogenson Building
100 Collip Circle, Suite 245
U.W.O. Research Park
London, Ontario, Canada N6G 4X8

Ph: (519) 858-5063

Fax (519) 858-5029

E-mail: pchu@uwo.ca

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This newsletter is based on information from the above report. The report includes a detailed statistical analysis of health-related issues for the City of London and each county in Southwestern Ontario.

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rising from 23.8% in 1993 to 27.9% in 1995. In Southwestern Ontario, students smoke more than in any other region in Ontario -- 28.4% in 1993.

There are many ways to quit smoking, contact your family physician.



Information throughout the newsletter is provided courtesy of Dr. E. Vingilis, [Population & Community Health Unit](#), and Dr. R. Alder and Dr. B. Lueske of the [Middlesex-London Health Unit](#).



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