

Vaping

Vaping products have many names, like e-cigarettes, vape pens, vapes, mods, tanks, and e-hookahs. They come in different shapes and sizes, and some even look like everyday items such as pens or USB drives.

Do you know the health risks of vaping?

Even short-term vaping can cause:

- Sore mouth or throat
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea

Nicotine is a common ingredient in vapes and is especially harmful to young people. It can:

- Affect brain development
- Negatively impact memory, concentration, impulse control, and mood
- Increase anxiety and stress
- Increase heart rate and blood pressure
- Be highly addictive

Talk to your teen about vaping:

Having open, ongoing conversations with your teen is important. Here are some tips to get started:

- Be patient and ready to listen. Give your teen space to share their thoughts without fear of judgment.
- Focus on the facts. Share reliable information about the risks of vaping and avoid scare tactics.
- Stay open and non-judgmental. If your teen tells you they've tried vaping, thank them for being honest. Offer to share some information and explore the benefits of being smoke- and vape-free together.

Get support:

- Ask your healthcare provider to talk with you and your teen about the risks of vaping and ways to be smoke- and vape-free.

- Consider suggesting that your teen talk with other trusted adults, such as relatives, teachers, faith leaders, coaches, or counsellors whom you know are aware of the risks of vaping. These supportive adults can help reinforce your message.

Keep the conversation going:

- Vaping discussions are not a one-time talk; it is an ongoing conversation. Odds are you will probably need to talk about the subject many times and in many different places.
- Strike up a conversation again, whenever you have some time together. You will also find that as your teen grows, your conversations about vaping will change and reflect their growing maturity, intellectual abilities and the pressures they face.

To learn more about vaping, please visit [Grand Erie Public Health's website](#) or call us at 519-753-4937 ext. 459.



Hand washing

Why is it important to wash our hands?

Washing your hands with soap for 20 seconds is the best way to stay healthy and stop germs from spreading.

Be sure to wash your hands:

- Before you touch your eyes, nose, or mouth
- Before and after touching a cut
- After touching garbage, petting animals, or if your hands look dirty
- After playing outside

Helpful tips

- Use regular reminders for your child to wash their hands
- Lead by example washing your hands
- Make it fun by making up your own song or game. There are also videos you can find on YouTube
- Use hand sanitizer if soap and water aren't available

[Learn more about handwashing steps.](#)

Remember to wash your hands often to stay safe and clean! More information can also be found on [Grand Erie Public Health's website.](#)



School clinic immunizations

This [fall/spring], Grand Erie Public Health will be visiting all elementary schools this to offer in-school vaccinations clinics for Grade 7 and 8 students. Students can receive the following publicly funded vaccines at these clinics:

- Hepatitis B (2 doses)
- Human Papillomavirus (HPV) (2 doses)
- Meningococcal (Men C-ACYW-135) (1 dose - required for school attendance under Immunization of School Pupils Act unless exempt).

The clinics are intended for students who have not yet received their first dose or are due for their second.

These vaccines are safe, effective, and strongly recommended as part of Ontario's Routine Immunization Schedule. Vaccines help protect against serious illnesses (e.g., HPV can prevent certain types of cancers) and can prevent diseases that can lead to hospitalization and significant health complications.

Keeping up to date with routine immunizations helps protect not only your child but the wider community, especially those who are more vulnerable.

For more information, visit [Grand Erie Public Health's website](#) or call 519-753-4937 ext. 445.



Remember to report your child's vaccinations

All children attending school in Ontario are required by law to report their vaccination status to public health.

You can contact your child's healthcare provider to obtain records, or to get missing vaccinations. You can report your child's immunization by phone, email or online. You will need their Ontario Health Card number when reporting their vaccines online.

Ways to report:

- **Online:** [Immunization Connect \(ICON\)](#)
- **Phone:** 519-753-4937 ext. 451
- **Email:** immunizationintake@bchu.org (*Privacy of personal health information submitted by email cannot be guaranteed and should be done at your own risk)
- **In Person:** 194 Terrace Hill St., Monday to Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
- **Mail:** 194 Terrace Hill St., Brantford, ON N3R 1G7
- **Fax:** 519-753-2140



School zone safety

The rush of cars, buses, and children arriving at school can create many dangers. Help keep kids safe on the way to and from school.

Drivers:

- Slow down and be ready to stop for school buses and pedestrians
- Respect the crossing guard's instructions
- Be aware of children potentially running in front or behind buses or other obstructions (snowbanks)
- Make sure your child gets out from the passenger side of your vehicle
- Park away from the school and walk your child onto school property

Teach your children to:

- Stop, look, listen, and make eye contact with drivers before crossing
- Walk only on the sidewalk and follow the crossing guard's instructions
- Do not use cell phones or earphones when walking

For more information, visit [CAA School Safety Patrol](#).



Active transportation in schools

Did you know that children need at least 60 minutes of physical activity each day?

Finding ways to fit this in daily routine is hard for busy families. Active transportation (AT) is any human powered form of transportation such as walking or wheeling (like cycling). Making the choice to send your child to school on foot or by bike is a great way to be active.

Children who walk or bike to school regularly enjoy many classroom and personal benefits, including:

- Improved concentration and better ability to manage with stress
- More social interaction and reduced feelings of isolation from spending time outdoors
- Saving money for families and fewer cars on the road
- Allows children to get the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity each day

Visit [Ontario Active School Travel](#) for more information on active transportation for schools.



Adapted from Ottawa Public Health

Stopping the spread of head lice

What are head lice?

Head lice are tiny insects, the size of a sesame seed, that live on the scalp. They lay tiny eggs (nits) that turn into insects (lice). They do not jump, fly, swim, or live on cats or dogs.

Head lice are common among school-aged children and **are not a sign of being unclean**

How do lice spread?

Head lice are most commonly spread through direct head-to-head contact. They can also spread by sharing personal items like hats, helmets, and hairbrushes.

How can I prevent head lice?

- Remind children to avoid head-to-head contact
- Don't share hats, hair bands, hair accessories, helmets, headphones, towels, or scarves
- Tie long hair back in a ponytail or braid
- Check your child's head once a week, especially around the ears and the neck area.

Learn more about prevention and treatment on [Grand Erie Public Health's website](#).



Mind your health

Mental health is an important part of our overall health. It influences how we think, what we feel, and how we behave. Our mental health can greatly impact our relationships, self-esteem, and ability to learn new things. Mental health challenges can happen to anyone, at any age, and in any situation.

Did you know: 1 in 5 students experience mental health challenges?

This is why it is so important to talk to your children about mental health and learn how to recognize the signs of when they might be struggling.

Possible signs of poor mental health:

- Avoiding friends and family
- Rebelling against authority
- Losing interest in activities they once enjoyed
- Frequent mood swings
- Significant drop in school marks

How parents can support their child's mental well-being:

- Encourage children to talk about their feelings
- Respect their feelings and emotions
- Stay positive and avoid being judgmental
- Take children to their family doctor to explore concerns

Your child can speak over the phone or chat online with a counselor from Kids Help Phone at 1-800-668-6868 or [kidshelpphone.ca](https://www.kidshelpphone.ca)

For more information visit [Grand Erie Public Health's website](#).



Mental health – your children

We all experience emotions; ups and downs are a normal part of life at any age. For children, recognizing signs of struggle, providing support and care can help them to develop strong emotional awareness and self-regulation skill.

Possible signs of mental health concern

Younger children

- Frequent changes in mood/emotions
- Easily hurt feelings, crying, anger, irritability
- Ongoing temper tantrums, throwing things, hitting others, etc.
- Persistent sadness and lack of interest in activities they normally enjoy
- Withdrawing from friends and family
- Increased need for contact and reassurance

Older children

- Outburst of anger or distress, frequent irritability
- Feelings of anxiety or panic
- Increased defiance or opposition
- Refusal to attend school or declining grades
- Use of drugs/alcohol
- Withdrawal from family, friends, activities
- Ongoing negative self-talk
- Renewed interest in activities from earlier childhood years

For further resources and support, visit [School Mental Health Ontario](#).



Protect yourself against West Nile virus and Lyme disease

Whether you're staying active outdoors, camping, or gardening, it's important to protect yourself and your family against West Nile virus and Lyme disease. West Nile virus is spread to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito, while Lyme disease is spread through the bite of an infected blacklegged tick.

To reduce your risk:

- Wear closed-toe shoes, socks, and light-coloured, long-sleeved shirts, and pants (dark colours attract mosquitos)
- Tuck pant legs into socks when walking in long grass.
- Apply bug spray with DEET or Icaridin to skin and clothing.
- After you get home from the outdoors, do a full body check for ticks on yourself, your children and your pets.
- Have a shower or bath within 2 hours of being outdoors.
- Clean up standing water around your home where mosquitoes like to breed

If you find a tick attached to your body, use tweezers or a specially designed tick remover to grab the insect as close to your skin as possible, and pull it straight out. Make a note of:

- Where you may have picked up the tick
- Where on your body it bit you
- The date of the bite

You can learn more and report your tick bite at etick.ca. If you feel unwell after a tick bite, call your doctor.

For more information on West Nile Virus and Lyme disease, visit Grand Erie Public Health's website on [West Nile Virus](#) and [ticks](#), or call the health unit at 519-753-4937 ext 470.



Stay home when you are sick

When children are sick, it is difficult for them to learn and participate in school and activities. Home is the best place for your child if they have any new symptoms of illness.

They can return to school and activities when they feel better for at least 24 hours (48 hours for nausea, vomiting or diarrhea) and they do not have a fever.

Thank you for taking care of your community!

Adapted with permission from Middlesex-London Health Unit