



Healthy communities

The Healthy Communities Partnership is a new project being led by Elgin St. Thomas Public Health and funded by the Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport. This project began with community wide input and a review of local statistics. Input from residents, community organizations and local policy makers was sought and a new committee was formed to review the data and make recommendations for Elgin St. Thomas. The Committee includes representatives from local municipalities, community residents and representatives of the home builders association. The goal of this committee is to create a healthier community.

Research tells us that a community is healthy when the physical supports, programs and policies are in place to make healthy choices easier choices. In order to work towards the vision where every Ontario community is healthy, the Ministry has identified six priority areas which provide a framework for organizing both policy and program initiatives, these include:



Injury Prevention



Mental Health Promotion



Tobacco Use/ Exposure



Substance and Alcohol Misuse



Healthy Eating



Physical Activity, Sport & Recreation

What does the Data show?

- Compared to the Province, Elgin St. Thomas has higher rates of smoking, obesity and poor nutrition which contributes to the higher rates of illness and death seen from chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease and lung disease in our community.
- Smoking rates in Elgin St. Thomas is significantly higher than that of the province. In fact, the proportion of current smokers appears to have increased between 2003 and 2008. The good news is the rates of teenagers starting to smoke has decreased during that timeframe. The most recent data still shows higher rates of teen smoking than that of Ontario.
- Men in Elgin St. Thomas are more likely to be overweight and obese than women. Compared to the Province our community has more overweight people. There is also an alarming trend that more teens are overweight and obese in Elgin St Thomas and that rates of teenage obesity are increasing faster than compared to the Province.
- The rates of people reporting active or moderately active lifestyles in Elgin St. Thomas is similar to that of the province; however, obesity rates indicated that physical activity may not be enough.
- The proportion of people not getting enough fruits and vegetables in a day is significantly higher in Elgin St. Thomas than the Province.
- Mental health emerged as a priority when speaking with the community, but local statistics are not available to demonstrate the current status.
- Injuries constitute the fourth highest cause of hospitalization in Elgin St. Thomas and the rates are higher than those in the province.
- The top priority for the population was motor vehicle collisions. Motor vehicle collisions were the most significant in the younger age groups and falls were most prevalent in the older age groups.
- There was significant community concern from residents, community agencies and local substance coalitions regarding prescription drug misuse.

Recommended Actions

Injury Prevention

- Increase awareness and knowledge regarding the impact of distracted driving and strategies to reduce multi-tasking while driving. Implement an education and awareness strategy targeting drivers, cyclists and pedestrians. Specifically, addressing the need for drivers and cyclists to share the road.
- Increase pedestrian safety and provide barrier-free access by encouraging municipalities to examine sidewalk maintenance and availability policies.

Mental Health Promotion

- Increase awareness of existing mental health promotion resources for adults and youth in the community.
- Increase knowledge in people of all ages regarding the importance of a healthy body – healthy mind connection.

Tobacco Use/Exposure

- Increase the availability of peer coaches and mentors to support people attempting to quit smoking.
- Increase the availability of free or low cost nicotine replacement therapy, brief intervention and in-depth counselling services locally.
- Advocate for policies regarding smoke-free multi-unit dwellings and minimum set-backs for smoking outside municipal buildings.

Substance & Alcohol Misuse

- Engage youth aged 10-24 in adapting and implementing evidence-based programs that address resiliency.
- Address prescription drug misuse in youth and adults through a multi sector approach with workplaces, physicians, and pharmacies.

Healthy Eating

- Increase access, availability and awareness of where to find healthy foods in schools, workplaces, the community and public facilities (including community gardens) and limit food and beverages high in calories, fat, sugar or salt.
- Enhance food skills training opportunities throughout the County (including basic nutrition and food safety concepts; learning menu planning, food budgeting, grocery shopping and food preparation skills).
- Advocate for policies that improve access and availability of healthy foods in schools, workplaces, and public facilities (including community gardens) and limit food and beverages high in calories, fat, sugar and salt.

Physical Activity, Sport and Recreation

- Increase the availability of free or low cost recreational activities for people of all ages with specific focus programming for school aged children after school hours.
- Increase the awareness of cycling and walking by supporting community events that promote active transportation such as, a car-free day, commuter challenge, a walk and shop downtown event etc.
- Increase the opportunities for people of all ages to use active transportation by reviewing and implementing municipal Master Plan documents and other relevant policies. With active transportation defined as any form of human-powered transportation, such as walking, cycling, using a wheelchair, in-line skating or skateboarding.

Funded by the Government of Ontario

