

THE TADDLER

Tips for Navigating Your Primary Care

By Taddle Creek FHT

The healthcare system can be challenging to navigate and this has been especially true over the past two years. The COVID-19 pandemic has turned out to be more of a marathon than a sprint. Everyone has times when they feel overwhelmed and exhausted and it may feel particularly challenging to ensure your health is taken care of. Taddle Creek FHT remains committed to working together with you to meet your care needs. Optimal healthcare is best achieved when we join together as partners in care. The information below is intended to help navigate the healthcare system and optimize efficiency for you. If you already engage in some of the strategies below, thank you!

Have an expired health card?



Many health cards expired during the pandemic and for a while some healthcare settings were accepting expired cards. This is no longer the case; some specialists and laboratories require an updated health card to access services. To reduce barriers and frustrations you may experience if you have an expired health card, please renew it by visiting Service Ontario <https://www.ontario.ca/page/health-card-renewal>.

Preventive care

Preventive screening is an important part of primary healthcare and includes mammograms, Pap tests, stool tests or colonoscopies, eye exams or hearing tests. There are a few ways to stay up-to-date with preventive care:

- Cancer Care Ontario routinely sends reminders for cancer care screening via Canada Post. If you receive a reminder for a Pap test or colon cancer screening, please contact your provider to request the necessary test
- Women between the ages of 50 to 74 can schedule their own mammogram without a referral by calling the nearest Ontario Breast Screening Program at 1-800-668-9304 (or locations can be found here <https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/find-cancer-services/breast-screening-locations>)



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Managing medication prescriptions

Medication management is optimized when the provider and patient connect to discuss how the medication is working and if there are any concerns. For both new and refill prescriptions, your provider may give you a time frame to book a follow up appointment. If this is the case, please set a reminder to book an appointment within the time frame. This is especially important if your provider charges a fee for refills without an appointment. If your provider does not require a follow up appointment, you are able to ask your pharmacy to fax your provider a refill request.



Repeat imaging or bloodwork

If your care plan involves repeat bloodwork or imaging in a given time frame and if a requisition has not already been provided to you, please set a reminder to contact your provider to request the requisition when it is time.

Accessing test results

TC FHT has a system to ensure provider's follow up on important test results ordered by our team and communicate the results to you. However, if you have not heard in the time frame you were given, you are welcome to call your provider's office to inquire. If your specialist ordered a test, please follow up with their office directly as they can better help you understand the results and discuss next steps. Unfortunately, TC FHT does not have the administrative capacity to track all tests ordered by other doctors in addition to our own.

Referrals

When a referral to a specialist, testing centre or program is part of your care plan, it is important to feel fully informed and take the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification. When a referral is made, you are able to ask your provider for the contact information of where you are being referred so that if you do not hear from them within the given time frame, you can contact them directly.

Tips for Pomelo messaging

Pomelo is a convenient and secure way for your care team to send messages regarding appointments, requisitions, prescriptions and test results. Pomelo increases efficiency but there are some considerations to be mindful of:

- Attachments sent through the portal expire within seven days, so please open messages as soon as possible
- Care providers may ask you to send documents through Pomelo, such as test results, forms to be completed or photos. Please only send documents such as these once you and your provider have communicated about it
- Pomelo is only checked periodically during business hours by administrative staff and is not for urgent medical concerns; please book an appointment so the team can support you as soon as possible

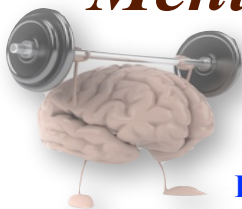


The healthcare system is imperfect and best navigated as a team. These are just some ways to help us work together and communicate effectively with each other as partners in care. TC FHT welcomes you to ask questions, seek clarification and provide feedback to help us help you navigate the healthcare system. TC FHT will continue to strive for the highest quality of care for all patients. Thank you.

Mental Health Corner

Away from Rumination, Towards Calm

By Farah Ahmed, Social Worker



One of the most common human desires is to escape or avoid suffering. Frankly, feeling bad feels bad, and the discomfort of being emotionally, physically, mentally or spiritually unwell can drive us to consciously or subconsciously distance ourselves from that which is painful. A common strategy that many people use to avoid, reduce or escape discomfort is called *rumination*.

Rumination – having repetitive, automatic negative thoughts – can serve as a distraction from the present source of distress or it can feel productive, like we're making sense of a situation, solving a problem or preparing ourselves for the unknown. While this may seem useful, it can ultimately lead to heightened emotional distress since rumination so often entails negative, catastrophic and unrealistic thoughts. Stress and uncertainty are a part of our human existence and it is inevitable that we will experience overwhelming thoughts from time to time; so, how can we help ourselves manage rumination?

Three Strategies for Managing Rumination

Our thoughts, emotions and bodily sensations are interconnected. Luckily, this interconnectedness means that there are many doorways we can walk through to maintain our wellness. For now, I offer you three specific strategies that can help to manage a ruminating mind.



Notice, label and challenge unhelpful thoughts. To shift out of ruminating on negative, catastrophic thoughts, we must first notice them. The next time you feel overwhelmed, ask yourself: "Am I overgeneralizing, catastrophizing or jumping to conclusions without knowing all of the facts?" Likely, the answer is yes. Next, try to label the emotion that

is happening for you as you are having these thoughts, and then ask yourself: "Are there any other possibilities other than the conclusion I'm coming to right now?"

This technique helps us to make more space between the catastrophic conclusion we are coming to and the emotional response it elicits within us. Often when we are in a ruminating state of mind, we accept our thoughts as facts which can amplify the emotional distress we experience. Challenging our thoughts, gently and without judging ourselves, can de-escalate the distress and disrupt the ongoing spiral of automatic thoughts that characterizes rumination.



Try free-flow writing. Instead of trying to stop yourself from having such automatic thoughts, you allow yourself to place them in a container of sorts by writing all the thoughts down, just as they are. Once expressed, you may find that you are more able to notice inaccurate thoughts, unhook from them and come up with a more balanced perspective.

Use mindful awareness of the breath. To manage rumination through breathing, try counting backwards from nine to zero while holding the number in your mind's eye for a full cycle of inhalation and exhalation. Focus your attention on the image of the number and tune into the felt sense of the breath filling and leaving your lungs; this can present a profound opportunity to ground yourself in the present moment, which the act of rumination so effectively severs you from. What you may find through the use of these strategies is a more grounded, aware and accurate view of yourself, others and the world around you, which can be quite a relief!

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT TADDLE CREEK

By: Sherry Kennedy, *Executive Director*

This column lets you know about Taddle Creek Family Health Team (TC FHT) events, program updates and announcements.

Ocean Electronic Referral (eReferral)

TC FHT implemented Ocean eReferral in May 2022. Ocean eReferral is funded by [Ontario Health](#) and operated by the [eHealth Center of Excellence](#). Ocean eReferral will simplify the referral process by enhancing communication between primary care providers and specialists/clinical organizations and enable quick and secure referrals to be sent and received through an electronic platform.

The benefits for patients include choosing to receive email notifications with referral status so you can track your referral from start to completion, receiving appointment instructions via email (i.e., do not eat two hours prior to appointment) and confirming appointments directly from email notifications.

After Hour Clinics (AHCs) Schedule Changes

As of July 1st, we are happy to announce that our after-hours clinics will be expanded to include a Friday 5:00 to 8:00 pm and a Saturday 9:30 to 3:30 pm clinic. Please check our website [homepage](#) for details about the location and contact information for the clinics

A few reminders about AHCs:

- For patients of TC FHT only
- For urgent medical matters
- Not a walk-in clinic; appointments must be booked on the day itself
- Should be accessed when you cannot see your regular primary care provider during regular office hours
- Tuesday has two AHCs, one at the Bay site and one at the Bloor site
- The Telephone Health Advisory Service or Telehealth is now called Health Connect Ontario and can be accessed by calling 811 or visiting their website (<https://healthconnectontario.health.gov.on.ca>). Please use our scheduled AHCs to seek care and outside of the AHC's hours, contact Health Connect Ontario.



COVID-19 – Resources

Since our last Taddler Newsletter we have provided three patient communications on COVID-19 either through Pomelo Health to patients registered in our patient portal or via our website homepage.

1. Apr 25, 2022 – Information about the antiviral medication Paxlovid. To learn more, visit <https://taddlecreekfht.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Got-questions-about-Paxlovid.pdf>
2. Mar 21, 2022 – In order to help protect against the ongoing risk of transmission, all patients over age two are required to wear a well-fitting mask that covers their nose and mouth to appointments unless there is proof of a

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medical exemption. To learn more, visit <https://taddlecreekfht.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Happy-Spring-Update-on-masks-COVID-19-treatment-and-vaccines-Mar-21-2022.pdf>

3. Feb 22, 2022 – Information about COVID-19 treatment and vaccine updates. This communication also provides a link to an excellent resource, “Confused About COVID?”. To learn more, visit <https://taddlecreekfht.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Update-on-COVID-19-Treatments.pdf>

Please take a moment to review these resources.

Trauma-Informed Care Training

TC FHT is committed to striving towards providing trauma-informed care. On April 26, 2022, we had a team training event, *Trauma-Informed Care – Building a Culture of Strength*. The event was facilitated by the [Crisis and Trauma Resource Institute](#).

During the event, we learned about the ripple effect of trauma on individuals, families, organizations and communities. We learned trauma is a wound and often an invisible one. We deepened our understanding of how the lasting impact of trauma can be physical, cognitive, emotional, spiritual and can affect ones relationships and sense of meaning, purpose, safety and connection.

We also learned that trauma-informed care is an approach that understands the presence of trauma, acknowledges the role trauma can play in a person's life, and promotes an environment that supports the individual and collective well-being of everyone. Building a strong trauma-informed culture will require that we:

- **promote awareness** through education for all staff
- **shift attitudes** towards a trauma-informed understanding of the behaviours and responses of others
- **foster safety** by exploring how our policies, practices and spaces can be adapted to promote safety for staff and patients
- **provide choice** by sharing power and space with others
- **highlight strengths** and focus on resiliency

Personnel Announcements

Amy Babcock, a Social Worker in our Mental Health Program, resigned on Apr 29, 2022 accepting a position closer to home outside of Toronto.

Andrea Eugene, Administrative Assistant for our Mental Health Program, resigned on Apr 18, 2022. Andrea relocated to Orillia and has since found a position at Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital.

Karla Hernandez has been hired as our Mental Health Program Administrative Assistant. Karla comes to us with a Centennial College Diploma in the Office Administration-Medical program and 5 years' experience as a Clinic Administrator. Welcome aboard!

Taddle Creek

DIABETES
DIGEST

Diabetes and Hearing Loss

By: Melanie Yeung, Registered Dietician and Certified Diabetes Educator

May is Speech and Hearing Awareness Month which is dedicated to raising awareness about the importance of hearing health at every age. Hearing loss is a common concern caused by aging, genes and noise exposure. However, did you know that adults with diabetes are more likely to experience hearing loss than those without diabetes?

Although more research is needed, several studies have indicated that hearing loss is twice as common in people who have diabetes compared to people of the same age without diabetes³. The good news is you can take steps to hear well. You have already taken an important step by reading this article!

How Can Diabetes Harm Your Ears?

Poor blood sugar control can damage the nerves that go to the arms, hands, legs and feet¹. This nerve damage or diabetic peripheral neuropathy can also cause nerve damage in your ears. Another theory is that, over time, diabetes can damage the small blood vessels in the inner ear and the vestibular system - the part of the ear that helps with balance - thus making it harder for signals related to hearing and balance to get to your brain².

How Can You Protect Your Ears?

- Keep your blood sugars as close to your target levels as possible. The goal set for many people with diabetes is less than 6.5 to 7% for the HbA1C blood test. This equals to home blood sugar readings ranging from 3.9 to 10 mmol/L
- Aim for your blood pressure to be equal to or less than 130/80 mmHg by exercising at least 150 minutes per week, eating a diet low in sodium (less than 2300 mg each day, about 1 teaspoon) and taking medications as prescribed by your doctor
- If you smoke or use other tobacco products, consider taking steps to quit or cut down. Taddle Creek FHT offers a smoking cessation program which includes free nicotine replacement therapy
- Wear ear protection around loud noises like lawn mowers



- Do not clean your ears with objects like cotton swabs or pens
- Get your hearing tested when you first learn you have diabetes and then every year after

How Can You Get Your Hearing Tested?

As a starting point, you can test your hearing in a few minutes by downloading the hearWHO app by the World Health Organization. If your result shows that you may have hearing loss, talk to your doctor. They can help you decide if you should see a medical professional called an audiologist for further testing.

Check your hearing!



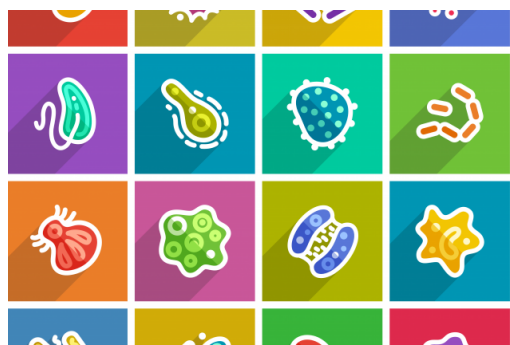
Download the app

To find an audiologist in your area, visit the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario website (<https://www.caslpo.com>).

Hearing loss can affect how you communicate with your family, friends and healthcare team. Addressing hearing loss is important for your quality of life. There are many reasons to keep your blood sugar levels in target range – protecting your hearing is just one of them!

References

1. Diabetes Canada. (n.d.). Nerve damage & amputation. Retrieved from <https://www.diabetes.ca/managing-my-diabetes/preventing-complications/nerve-damage--amputation>
2. Fukushima, H., et al., (2006). Effects of type 2 diabetes mellitus on cochlear structure in humans. Arch Otolaryngol Head Neck Surg, Volume 132(9):934-938. Retrieved from <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamaotolaryngology/fullarticle/484479>
3. Horikawa, C., et al., (2013). Diabetes and risk of hearing impairment in adults: A meta-analysis. Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism, Volume 98(1): 51-58. Retrieved from <https://academic.oup.com/jcem/article/98/1/51/2823051>



The Basics of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs)

By Victoria O'Neill, Nurse Practitioner

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are among the most transmissible infections affecting humans and prevalence rates continue to climb. STIs can be passed from one person to another during sex or intimate contact and can affect people of all ages and

sexual orientations. Most STIs are caused by the transmission of bacteria, viruses and parasites during unprotected vaginal, oral or anal sex; others can be contracted by skin-to-skin contact. The most common STIs are linked to eight different pathogens. Currently, four of these can be cured: syphilis, gonorrhoea, chlamydia and trichomoniasis. The other four are viral and are incurable, though symptoms can be managed: hepatitis B, herpes simplex virus, HIV and human papilloma virus (HPV). Common symptoms of STIs are vaginal discharge, urethral discharge or burning in men, genital ulcers and abdominal pain. However, the majority of STIs are asymptomatic; thus prevention and screening are important for anyone who is sexually active.

Prevention

Using protection, such as condoms or dental dams, correctly and consistently is one of the best safeguards against STIs. It is important to have open communication with sexual partners about safe sex practices, such as using protection and regular STI screening. There is a medication for men called PrEP that is taken daily to prevent HIV. There are also some safe and highly effective vaccines available for viral STIs, including hepatitis B and HPV (see HPV Vaccine below).

Screening and Diagnosis

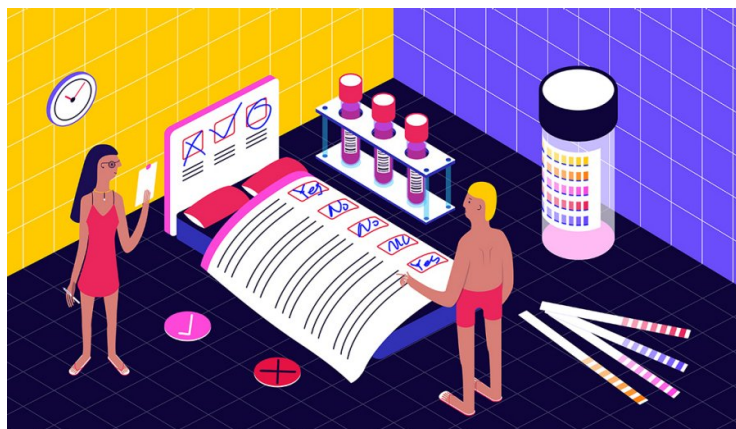
Detection and diagnostic tests for STIs are done with a urine sample, swab or blood test. If you have any of the symptoms mentioned above, you can get tested at your primary care provider's office or at one of the many sexual health clinics in the city. If you are sexually active and have more than one partner, you should get tested at least once a year, even if you have no symptoms. If you have multiple partners, you should test more frequently (i.e., every 3 to 6 months).

Treatment

Bacterial STIs (gonorrhoea, chlamydia and syphilis) and one parasitic STI (trichomoniasis) are generally curable with a single dose of an antibiotic. For HPV and HIV, the most effective medications available are antivirals that can modulate/control symptoms but cannot cure them. Hepatitis B antiviral medication can help fight the virus and slow damage to the liver.

HPV Vaccine

Some strands of HPV are linked to cancer and the Gardasil vaccine helps develop antibodies to these strands. By the end of 2020, the HPV vaccine was introduced as part of the routine immunization program in 111 countries, mostly high- and middle-income countries. In low- and middle-income countries, the HPV vaccine could prevent deaths caused



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by cervical cancer of millions of women over the next decade if 80% vaccination coverage could be achieved for young women age 11 to 15 years¹. The Gardasil 9 vaccine is covered by OHIP for grade 7 and 8 students and is offered by local public health units and at TC FHT offices. You can still get vaccinated as an adult; however, it is not covered by OHIP. Extended health benefits may cover the vaccine. Speak to your healthcare provider to see if the vaccine is recommended for you.

Below are some additional resources to explore:

Toronto Public Health

Sex and U ||

<https://www.sexandu.ca/>

Sexual Health Ontario ||

www.sexualhealthontario.ca

Hassle Free Clinic ||

<https://www.hasslefreeclinic.org/>

Planned Parenthood ||

<https://www.plannedparenthood.org/>

World Health Organization ||

<https://www.who.int/health-topics/#S>

References

1. World Health Organization. (2021). Sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Retrieved from

[https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/sexually-transmitted-infections-\(stis\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/sexually-transmitted-infections-(stis))

Attention Asthma Patients!

Taddle Creek Family Health Team (TC FHT) has teamed up with eAMS (electronic Asthma Management System). If you have asthma, prior to your next appointment with your physician/nurse practitioner, you will receive an appointment reminder via email requesting you register with eAMS. Registering with eAMS can increase the efficiency and productivity of your asthma appointment (you can also register on your own anytime). Once you register, and complete a simple asthma questionnaire, information from your questionnaire is securely sent to your MD/NP with tailored recommendations to improve your asthma management. These recommendations are in line with the latest asthma research and guidelines. By registering you will also be able to view your personalized self-management asthma action plan and benefit from asthma educational material.



IF YOU HAVE ASTHMA PLEASE CONSIDER REGISTERING TODAY.

IF YOU NEED SUPPORT REGISTERING

CALL 416-260-1315

AND REQUEST THE eAMS

REGISTRATION GUIDE -

[HTTPS://WWW.EASTHMA.CA/PATIENTS.HTML](https://www.easthma.ca/patients.html)

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DISCLAIMER

The information presented in The Taddler is for educational purposes only and should not be used as a substitute for the professional advice, treatment or diagnosis from your health care provider. Contact your physician, nurse practitioner or other qualified health care professional if you have any questions or concerns about your health.

**The purpose of the TC FHT Newsletter,
"The Taddler" is to provide:**

Education on varied health-related topics

Regular communication about what is happening at TC FHT

Information on issues that impact TC FHT and its patients

A means for patients to get acquainted with TC FHT team members

We hope you enjoy reading it!

**The Taddler is not for private marketing purposes*

Taddle Creek Family Health Team

June 2022 - December 2022 Groups/Workshops/Drop-In Offerings

Groups/Clinics are open to Taddle Creek Family Health Team patients
 Additional information is available on the Programs and Services drop down menu,
 see website: <https://taddlecreekfht.ca/>
 Dates are subject to change

Event	Date(s)	Time	Learn About/Assistance With
CBT for Insomnia Group (CAMH) Virtual Call 416-260-1315 Note: MD referral required	May 24-Jun 21, 2022 5 Sessions to complete Sep 7-Oct 5, 2022	Tuesdays 1:30 - 4:00 pm Wednesdays 4:30 - 7:00 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is used when treating insomnia • Techniques to help you get quality sleep that will promote good physical and mental health • How our minds and thoughts contribute to insomnia • Practicing mindfulness to reduce stress and help you get to sleep
Mindful Nutrition Group Virtual Call 416-260-1315 Note: MD referral required	Starts Sep 21, 2022 10 Sessions to complete	Wednesdays 5:00 - 7:00 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reaching and maintaining a healthy balance between eating, physical activity and emotional eating • Essentials of nutrition and exercise • Recognizing and managing emotional eating
Intuitive Eating Group Virtual Call 416-204-1256 Note: The group is open to patients currently enrolled in the Diabetes Education Program	Nov 1 - Dec 13, 2022 7 sessions to complete	Tuesdays 4:00 - 6:00 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a healthy relationship with food, mind and body • Getting in touch with your body's signals of hunger, fullness and satisfaction • Mindful meditation and relaxation exercises • Strategies to cope with anxiety, depression, stress, fear and guilt around managing diabetes
Blood Sugar Management Workshop Virtual Call 416-204-1256	Jun 1, 2022 (Part 1) Jun 8, 2022 (Part 2) Jun 23, 2022 (Part 1) Jun 30, 2022 (Part 2) Jul 6, 2022 (Part 1) Jul 13, 2022 (Part 2) Jul 21, 2022 (Part 1) Jul 28, 2022 (Part 2) Aug 3, 2022 (Part 1) Aug 10, 2022 (Part 2) Aug 18, 2022 (Part 1) Aug 25, 2022 (Part 2)	Wednesdays 9:00 - 11:00 am 9:00 - 11:00 am Thursdays 5:00 - 7:00 pm 5:00 - 7:00 pm Wednesdays 9:00 - 11:00 am 9:00 - 11:00 am Thursdays 5:00 - 7:00 pm 5:00 - 7:00 pm Wednesdays 9:00 - 11:00 am 9:00 - 11:00 am Thursdays 5:00 - 7:00 pm 5:00 - 7:00 pm	An introductory two-part series designed to help individuals living with prediabetes or diabetes. Workshops will be held over Zoom. Part 1: Getting Started <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is diabetes? • What causes diabetes? • How is prediabetes/diabetes diagnosed? • How do I prevent long term complications related to diabetes? • Is diabetes reversible? Part 2: Taking Charge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can I manage my blood sugars? • What can I eat when I have prediabetes/diabetes? • Can exercise help with prediabetes/diabetes? • How does stress impact my prediabetes/diabetes?