

# THE TADDLER

## The Health Benefits of Time in Nature

*By Andrea Filip, Physician Assistant*

Despite new technological advances in our medical system, it is important to remember that a key component of health and wellness is also found in our personal behaviours. A recent article in Time magazine by Arianna Huffington noted that “whether for preventing disease or optimizing the treatment of disease, **behaviour** is indeed a miracle drug”. Her article identifies five foundational daily behaviours that, together, make up this miracle drug including: sleep, food, movement, stress management, and connection. A way we can integrate a few of these behaviour changes is through increasing time outdoors and in nature. Interestingly, exposure to nature has its own benefits, including that it doesn’t require physical activity to get results!

Behaviour change can be hard; however, a proven strategy is to start with one specific goal that can be achieved by making small changes in your routine. An example could be taking a leisurely walk during your lunch break or after dinner. It could also be valuable to incorporate mindfulness by focusing on the beauty of the nature around you, such as the sky, clouds, trees, birds, or a breeze. Spending time in nature might look like bundling up and going to a local park, meeting a friend to get a warm beverage, or stepping outside to enjoy the winter scenery.

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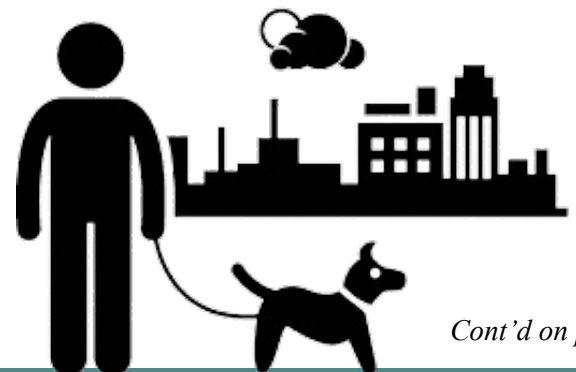
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Initially started by the British Columbia Parks Foundation, there has been an increase in nature prescriptions, when a healthcare provider recommends spending time outside to increase well being, including time in a park. Dr. Melissa Lem from Hamilton Family Health Team did extensive research and found evidence that prescribed time in a park has health benefits. In the [video link](#) below it is recommended to spend around two hours outdoors weekly, at least 20 minutes at a time.

The City of Toronto has also launched an initiative that allows you to get 50 percent savings on daily admission to the Toronto Zoo by getting a prescription from your primary care provider. For more information about the benefits of nature, check out the resources listed below.

### Resources and References:

1. Time Magazine - Behaviour Is a Miracle Drug for Our Health (Article):  
<https://time.com/6309926/behavior-is-a-miracle-drug-health/>
2. CTV News - 'Nature therapy' program offered as new medical prescription to Canadians:  
<https://www.ctvnews.ca/health/nature-therapy-program-offered-as-new-medical-prescription-to-canadians-1.5358112>
3. British Columbia Parks Foundation: A Prescription for Nature  
<https://www.parkprescriptions.ca/#:~:text=A%20prescription%20worth%20filling,evidence%2Dbased%20nature%20prescription%20program>
4. Hamilton Family Health Team - Health Benefits of Nature (Video):  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L7hp1YdF6fk>
5. Ideas for outdoor activities for kids:  
<https://getthekidsoutside.com>
6. Healthcare professionals can now prescribe visits to the Toronto Zoo  
<https://toronto.ctvnews.ca/healthcare-professionals-can-now-prescribe-visits-to-the-toronto-zoo-1.6582318>



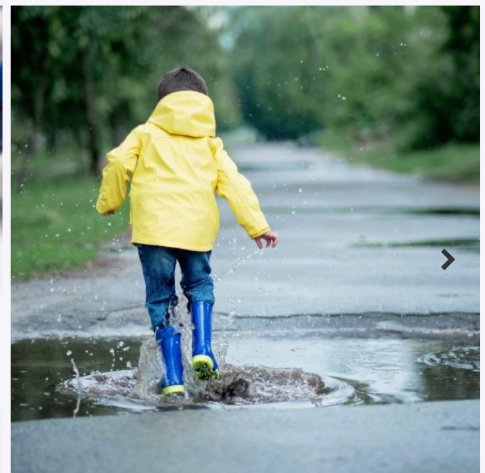
## GET THE KIDS OUTSIDE

[ACTIVITIES](#)[TIPS & TRICKS](#)[GIFT IDEAS](#)[SHOP](#)

[36 Simple Autumn Outdoor Activities to Help Kids Fall in Love with Nature](#)



[How to Help Your Kids Stay Active Outside this Winter](#)



[16 Rainy Day Outdoor Activities Your Kids Will Love](#)

## Mental Health Corner

### Caring for the Caregiver: Managing Caregiver Stress and Burnout

By: Stephen Fenn, Registered Social Worker

Being a support person can be a fulfilling and empowering experience, but it can also be challenging. Many people provide caregiving to someone in their lives either formally or informally, whether that be a child, someone coping with a chronic health or mental health condition, or an elder. In Canada, it is estimated that 1 in 4 people will provide caregiving support, often while managing their own stressors and needs.<sup>1</sup> Burnout occurs when a person becomes too overwhelmed while caring for someone else to the point that it negatively impacts their own wellness. Caregiver burnout is a very common experience, with nearly two thirds of caregivers experiencing burnout to some degree.<sup>2</sup>

If you are a caregiver, it is important to find a balance that works for you. Below are some strategies that could help support you.

#### 1. Accessing Community Resources

When the level of need exceeds our ability to help, we will experience burnout. While many resources are available, they can often be difficult to find and access. Reaching out to someone on your healthcare team can help you find supports available to you. Some examples of resources include:

- Home based supports including Personal Support Workers and people who can help with meal preparation and house keeping
- Home accessibility modifications
- Respite and caregiver burnout prevention supports

#### 2. Peer-Based Supports

Isolation is a very common experience for caregivers, particularly if you are the sole caregiver (e.g., an only child caring for aging parents). Furthermore, we may feel isolated due to a loss of

our own social activities or others not understanding our stressors as a caregiver. Peer-based programs that involve meeting with other caregivers can greatly reduce the emotional burden of caregiver burnout. Within Toronto alone there are several caregiver support programs, many of which are specialized to specific types of caregiving (e.g., caring for aging parents, caring for a family member with a chronic mental illness, caring for a child with developmental disabilities, and more).

#### 3. Seeking Professional Support

Caregiving can be both physically and emotionally taxing, and can have a significant impact on our physical and mental health. Research indicates that around half of caregivers feel their role has negatively impacted their mental health, with similar numbers meeting the clinical threshold for depression.<sup>3,4</sup> This is why it is important that caregivers care not only for others, but also for their own needs. Mental health counsellors can play a key role in your self-care plan as a caregiver by exploring how you are feeling, working with you to develop strategies to maintain and improve your wellness and helping you manage difficult emotions that arise from caregiving, such as anger, grief and loss.

Caregiving is an important and difficult role; however, we don't have to walk this road alone. If you are caring for someone and not sure where to turn to for support, please reach out to your primary care provider or the mental health program (which offers single session support for resource navigation) for further information and resources.

#### References:

1. <https://cpa.ca/psychology-works-fact-sheet-caregiver-stress/>
2. <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/9225-caregiver-burnout>
3. <https://www.caregiver.org/news/caregiver-isolation-and-loneliness/>
4. <https://mentalhealthcommission.ca/what-we-do/caregiving/>



## WHAT'S HAPPENING AT TADDLE CREEK

By: Cheryl Dobinson, Executive Director

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

*Hello Taddler readers,*

*I'm excited to be writing my first Taddler column as the new Executive Director of Taddle Creek Family Health Team (TC FHT). I started on October 23, 2023 and in these early days I've been busy getting to know the organization, the programs and services, and all the wonderful members of the team. It's abundantly clear that I'm coming into a stable, healthy organization where there's a lot of goodwill and positivity. I'm thrilled to have the opportunity to be part of the next chapter of TC FHT.*

*A bit about me: For the past 20 years I've worked in community health in Toronto, most recently as a senior leader at a Community Health Centre (Planned Parenthood Toronto), and previously at the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation, Sherbourne Health Centre, and the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health. From this, I bring experience and passion for building community, championing equity and diversity in health care, and working towards social justice for youth, 2SLGBTQ+ communities, and other equity-seeking groups.*

*I joined TC FHT because I see a unique opportunity here in my local community to lead an organization that furthers high quality interdisciplinary primary care, and health promotion. I also resonate strongly with TC FHT's vision of being ahead of the curve as partners in providing accessible, integrated primary care for the well-being of our patients and ourselves.*

*In my new role, I will strive to build on the impressive legacy of Sherry Kennedy, the outgoing Executive Director, who so capably led TC FHT for the past 17 years. She leaves big shoes to fill, and I'm grateful for the thorough orientation and training that she provided to help set me up for success.*

*I look forward to continuing to immerse myself in TC FHT in the coming months, and to working with the staff, physicians, and patients in supporting the health and well-being of the communities served by this amazing organization.*

*All the best,*

*Cheryl Dobinson, Executive Director*



*Cont'd from page 4 (What's Happening at TC)*

## **Patient Care Survey**

The 2023 Patient Care Survey results are in; we received 1547 survey responses (10% response rate) between Nov 28 and Dec 27, 2023. A sincere thank you to those of you who completed the survey.

### **Quality of Care Provided**

#### Overall:

- 77% of respondents were very satisfied and 18% were satisfied with the care they receive at TC FHT

#### The last time you spoke/interacted with your primary care provider (physician or nurse practitioner)

- 97% felt primary care provider completely or mostly understood the importance of their visit
- 94% were very satisfied or satisfied with the discussion
- 95% were very satisfied or satisfied with the quality of care provided during a virtual visit

#### For any type of appointment/interaction

- 97% always or often felt they had the opportunity to ask questions about recommended treatment
- 96% always or often felt they were involved in decisions about their care and treatment
- 94% always or often felt they had enough time with their doctor, NP or someone else for any type of appt/interaction

#### After Hours Clinic

- 88% were very satisfied or satisfied with this service

#### Access

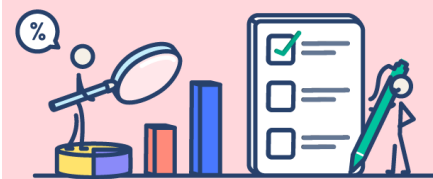
- 73% were able to connect with a primary care provider either on same or next day
- 86% indicated, in the past 12 months, they never opted to visit a walk-in clinic rather than contacting/visiting TC FHT
- 81% indicated, in the past 12 months, they never opted to visit an emergency department rather than contacting/visiting TC FHT

#### Quality of Care by Provider Type

- 98% rank care received by a physician as excellent/good
- 96% rank care received by a nurse practitioner as excellent/good
- 85% rank care received by a physician assistant as excellent/good
- 93% rank care received by a pharmacist as excellent/good
- 87% rank care received by a dietitian as excellent/good
- 78% rank care received by a social worker as excellent/good
- 94% rank care received by a registered nurse as excellent/good
- 85% rank care received by a diabetes education provider as excellent/good

#### Quality of Service

- 92% always or often indicate practice follow-up on any serious problems
- 93% always or often have a positive experience with reception
- 93% always or often feel wait time in office is reasonable
- 90% always or often had their messages returned in a timely manner
- 84% always or often could contact the office by telephone easily



Taddle Creek

DIABETES  
DIGEST

# Diabetes and Sexual Health

By: Melanie Yeung, Registered Dietitian & Certified Diabetes Educator

For many people, sex is a natural part of their lives that can bring pleasure and joy. Wanting to have sex and not being able to can contribute to challenges with self-esteem and intimacy.<sup>1</sup> Many people will experience sexual dysfunction at some point in their lives, whether they have diabetes or not.<sup>2</sup> However, sexual dysfunction is more common for people with diabetes.

Sexual dysfunction is defined as a problem that can prevent you from experiencing satisfaction from sexual activity. Examples of sexual dysfunction can include erectile dysfunction (ED), decreased libido and pain when having sex, vaginal dryness, urinary tract infections (UTIs), yeast infections and difficulty achieving orgasm.

## How common is sexual dysfunction among people with diabetes compared to the average population?

Men with diabetes are three times more likely to have trouble getting or keeping an erection.<sup>2</sup> Studies show that women with type 1 diabetes are three times more likely to experience sexual issues compared to those without diabetes and those with type 2 diabetes are 67% more likely to experience sexual dysfunction.<sup>3,4</sup> Having diabetes does not mean you will definitely experience sexual dysfunction. However, having high blood sugar levels can damage the blood vessels and nerves over time. This can restrict the amount of blood flowing to your sexual organs, cause a loss in sensation and also create difficulty with arousal.<sup>2</sup>

## What are the treatment options?

Talk to your healthcare team for more support - having this conversation can be half the battle. Depending on the extent of the sexual difficulties you are experiencing, you could see improvement by getting your blood sugar levels into your target range. Better diabetes management can also help to prevent further damage to blood vessels and nerves.

Drugs like Viagra, Cialis, hormone therapies and even over-the-counter lubricants can help improve self-esteem and make you feel more confident in sexual situations. Even when treating the root causes of sexual dysfunction, some people may still feel embarrassed or insecure. Mental health professionals like social workers, psychotherapists, or sex therapists can help.

In summary, work with your healthcare team to bring your diabetes under control. Ask them about medications, hormones, or supplement therapies that can improve your sexual health. Finally, consider reaching out to a mental health professional for further support. Your sexual and mental health concerns are valid and deserve to be treated with care.

## References

1. <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/9225-caregiver-burnout>
2. <https://cpa.ca/psychology-works-fact-sheet-caregiver-stress/>
3. <https://www.caregiver.org/news/caregiver-isolation-and-loneliness/>
4. <https://mentalhealthcommission.ca/what-we-do/caregiving/>



# Menopause

By: Victoria O'Neill, Nurse Practitioner

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), “menopause is marked by the end of monthly menstruation, due to loss of ovarian follicular function”. This means that the ovaries stop releasing eggs for fertilization and menstrual periods end. Worldwide, menopause naturally occurs between the ages of 45 to 55 years and “is deemed to have occurred after 12 consecutive months without menstruation”.<sup>2</sup> Menopause can also occur earlier in life due to medical conditions and/or treatments.



There are many changes people may experience when they go through menopause, including hormonal changes. Hormonal changes can affect physical, emotional, and social well-being. Symptoms can be very different for each person, making menopause a unique journey. In many, symptoms only last for a few years, but in others, symptoms can be present for greater than 10 years. For some, these changes and symptoms can be mild, and for others have a major impact on quality of life.

Some symptoms that may start in menopause include hot flashes and night sweats (vasomotor symptoms), palpitations (which can last several minutes), changes in regularity of menstrual cycle, vaginal dryness, pain during sexual intercourse, incontinence, difficulty with sleeping and changes in mood like anxiety and/or depression. Vasomotor symptoms (VSM) are the most common, occurring in 80% of those going through menopause.



The most common treatment for the symptoms listed above is menopause hormone therapy (MHT). MHT involves administering hormones to patients within 10 years of their final period (or before 60 if age that menstruation stopped is unknown). Duration of treatment is no longer limited to 5 years, but individualized to the person. These MHTs include administration of estrogen, through a variety of methods, including orally, through skin (patch, creams, gel), or through a vaginal ring. For those who have a uterus, progesterone is also prescribed. In Canada, no product for testosterone treatment has been approved or recommended for menopause symptoms. MHT can improve vasomotor symptoms, up to 90%, as well as improve sleep and mood. A primary care provider can assess for risks/contraindications prior to prescribing MHT.

Some non-hormonal options can also be considered if the patient has contraindications, or prefers an alternative. Some of these options include anti-depressants/anti-anxiety medications, such as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) and serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs), as well as medications like gabapentinoids, vaginal moisturizers and lubricants. Other options include pelvic floor physiotherapy and avoiding triggers such as alcohol, caffeine or spicy foods. Studies show that exercise and yoga are good for overall health, but have no effect on vasomotor symptom frequency. Most recent research from the American Menopause Society showed that there is no evidence that dietary supplements decrease menopause symptoms. However, there was some evidence that clinical hypnosis and cognitive behavioural therapy can be effective.

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*Cont'd from page 7 (Menopause)*

In the past, there were concerns of an increase in cardiovascular events with MHT, but recent research shows a possible decrease in coronary artery disease in women that start earlier than 60 years of age or within 10 years of menopause.<sup>2</sup>

As mentioned, there are many different options to help treat menopausal symptoms. To make sure each person finds the safest and best choice for their individual situation, it is always best to discuss options with a primary care provider before starting any treatment.

### References

1. The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada - [www.socg.org](http://www.socg.org)
2. World Health Organization - [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)
3. North American Menopause Society - [www.menopause.org](http://www.menopause.org)



## Taddler Tips

### Training and Resources for Individuals Affected by Diabetes

A collaboration between Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation and Diabetes Canada

**JDRF**

**DIABETES  
CANADA**

The Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF) has collaborated with Diabetes Canada to create a mental health and diabetes training program for allied healthcare providers, people living with diabetes, and caregivers of people with diabetes. More information can be found at this link <https://www.jdrf.ca/>. They also have a directory of mental health providers who have completed this training. The directory can be found at this website: <https://directory.jdrf.ca>

## THE TADDLER

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Taddle Creek Family Health Team  
790 Bay Street, Suite 306  
Toronto ON M5G 1N8  
416-260-1315  
[www.taddlecreekfht.ca](http://www.taddlecreekfht.ca)

Editors: Sarah Wash and Marlie Standen

Editorial Team: Cheryl Dobinson,  
Margarita Tkalenko, Yadvika Sharma  
and Elysha Mawji

### 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:

1. Education on varied health-related topics
  2. Regular communication about what is happening at TC FHT
  3. Information on issues that impact TC FHT and its patients
  4. 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

## March 1, 2024 - June 1, 2024 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 <b>Virtual</b>	Jan 9, 2024 - Feb 6, 2024	Tuesdays 5:00 - 7:30 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behavioural and cognitive strategies to help treat insomnia, improve your sleep quality and promote good physical and mental health</li> </ul>
Call 416-260-1315 Note: MD referral required	Apr 11, 2024 - May 9, 2024	Thursdays 2:30 - 5:00 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An understanding of the physiological systems that regulate sleep</li> <li>• Learn about relaxation techniques to reduce stress and help you get to sleep</li> <li>• Use sleep diaries to monitor progress</li> </ul>
Mindful Nutrition Group <b>Virtual</b>	April 17, 2024 - June 19, 2024	Wednesdays 5:00 pm - 6:30 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in mindful eating practices</li> <li>• Healthier relationship with food and your body</li> <li>• Adoption of intuitive eating principles</li> <li>• Decrease in emotional eating episodes</li> </ul>
Call 416-260-1315 to register for group	7 sessions to complete		
Intuitive Eating with Diabetes Group <b>Virtual</b>	April 5, 2024 - May 17, 2024	Fridays 10:00 am - 12:30 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating a healthy relationship with food, mind and body</li> <li>• Getting in touch with your body's signals of hunger, fullness and satisfaction</li> <li>• Mindful meditation and relaxation exercises</li> <li>• Strategies to cope with anxiety, depression, stress, fear and guilt around managing diabetes</li> </ul>
Call 416-204-1256 Note: MD referral required	7 sessions to complete		



Event	Date(s)	Time	Learn About/Assistance With
Blood Sugar Management Workshop <b>Virtual</b>  Call 416-204-1256	March 6, 2024 (Part 1)	Wednesdays 9:00 - 11:00 am	An introductory two-part series designed to help individuals living with prediabetes or diabetes. Workshops will be held over Zoom.
	March 13, 2024 (Part 2)	9:00 - 11:00 am	
	March 21, 2024 (Part 1)	Thursdays 5:00 - 7:00 pm	Part 1: Getting Started <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is diabetes?</li> <li>• What causes diabetes?</li> <li>• How is prediabetes/diabetes diagnosed?</li> <li>• How do I prevent long term complications related to diabetes?</li> <li>• Is diabetes reversible?</li> </ul>
	March 28, 2024 (Part 2)	5:00 - 7:00 pm	
	April 3, 2024 (Part 1)	Wednesdays 9:00 - 11:00 am	Part 2: Taking Charge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can I manage my blood sugars?</li> <li>• What can I eat when I have prediabetes/diabetes?</li> <li>• Can exercise help with prediabetes/diabetes?</li> <li>• How does stress impact my prediabetes/diabetes?</li> </ul>
	April 10, 2024 (Part 2)	Thursdays 5:00 - 7:00 pm	
	April 18, 2024 (Part 1)	Wednesdays 9:00 - 11:00 am	
	April 25, 2024 (Part 2)	9:00 - 11:00 am	
	May 01, 2024 (Part 1)	Thursdays 5:00 - 7:00 pm	
	May 10, 2024 (Part 2)	5:00 - 7:00 pm	
	May 16, 2024 (Part 1)		
	May 23, 2024 (Part 2)		

