

THE TADDLER

HPV Testing for Cervical Cancer: A better test, less often!

By: Shauna Sturgeon, Nurse Practitioner

What is HPV?

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) refers to a group of highly contagious viruses, which can spread through any direct contact of skin or mucous membranes to the genital area during sexual contact. HPV infections typically cause no symptoms and most people will clear the infection without ever knowing they had HPV.

HPV and Cervical Cancer

While most people will clear an HPV viral infection within 1-2 years, some people will develop a chronic infection with a high-risk strain of HPV that will remain active for many years and, if left undetected, this can develop into cervical cancer. Some strains of HPV can also cause genital warts, but these strains of the virus do not cause cervical cancer.

OHIP-Covered HPV Testing Program

As of March 3rd, 2025, the Ontario Ministry of Health began funding HPV testing as the first-line screening test for cervical pre-cancer and cancer. The HPV test is safe, effective and highly sensitive for detecting high-risk strains of HPV, and has replaced the Pap test as the primary screening test for identifying persons at risk of cervical cancer. This important change is based on the best available scientific evidence, and will improve the ability to detect cervical pre-cancer and cancer, while reducing the need for unnecessary testing for those who are not currently infected with HPV and therefore not at risk.

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Who should be for tested for HPV and when?

Anyone with a cervix who has had any sexual contact in the genital area should begin testing for HPV at age 25. If the test results show that a person is HPV negative, this screening test will be repeated every 5 years in most cases. If the test is positive, further guidance will be provided by a healthcare provider.

People who have had Pap tests for cervical cancer screening in the past will be tested for HPV when their next Pap test is due. For example: **If you recently had a Pap test and it was normal, you do not need to be tested for HPV until your recommended follow-up cervical cancer screening test is due in 3 years.**

Evidence has shown that there is no need to be tested sooner or more often for most people since an HPV infection will typically resolve within 1-2 years, and chronic infections with high-risk types of HPV will take more than 10 years to develop into precancerous or cancerous cells.

People who have a weakened immune system, persons who have recently had an abnormal Pap test, or those who are already known to be HPV positive should speak to their health care provider to determine how often they should be screened.

How is the HPV test done?

The HPV test is done in the same way as a Pap test: Your healthcare provider will perform a pelvic exam to collect a sample to send to the lab to be tested for HPV.

Some labs are offering private pay self-swab testing for HPV but this is not OHIP-covered. It is important to know that self-swabs for HPV testing have not been well studied yet, and may not be as effective at detecting HPV when compared to testing by a healthcare provider, so these tests are not currently funded by OHIP and are not recommended at this time (Cancer Care Ontario, 2025).

Should I get the HPV vaccine?

The HPV vaccine is highly effective and protects against over 90% of the high-risk strains of HPV that cause cervical cancer (Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, 2025). The vaccine is publicly funded for all grade 7 students and high-risk individuals including men who have sex with men up to age 26. The vaccine is also covered by many private insurers for individuals up to age 45. The vaccine manufacturer also offers a patient assistance program to help qualifying low-income individuals access the vaccine for free. If you have questions about the vaccine, please speak to your health care team.

I still have questions about HPV...

You can find more information about HPV at <https://hpvinfo.ca/>

Your health care team is also available to answer your questions and would be happy to discuss the changes to the Cervical Cancer Screening Program at your next appointment.

Please note that between March 7th and 24th, 2025 Cancer Care Ontario mistakenly sent letters to patients aged 69+ advising them they should have HPV testing. This is incorrect: If you are 69 or over and were previously told by your health care provider you no longer need Cervical Cancer Screening you should disregard this letter and you do not need HPV testing.

References:

Cancer Care Ontario. *Guidelines and advice: Follow-up of self-collected human papilloma (HPV) testing*. Retrieved March 17, 2025 from <https://www.cancercareontario.ca>

Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (SOGC). *Prevention*. HPVinfo. Retrieved March 17, 2025 from <http://www.hpvinfo.ca>



Mental Health Corner

How to find a Therapist

By: Zoe Thornton, Masters of Social Work Student

This article will provide information on who therapy is for, the difference between private and publicly funded therapists in Ontario, where to look for therapists, and questions to ask therapists you're considering working with.

Is Therapy for Me?

When it comes to seeking mental health support, no problem is too big or too small. Any time your quality of life isn't what you want it to be, therapy can help.

Choosing Between Private & Publicly Funded Therapy

Choosing between publicly funded and private therapy depends on your needs, urgency, and finances. In Ontario, publicly-funded therapy is free but often has longer wait times, a limited number of sessions, and may only be available to patients of specific health care organizations such as Family Health Teams or Community Health Centres. Private therapists typically have shorter wait times and can offer longer-term, more specialized support, with fees ranging from \$100 to \$250+ per session. Private therapists are often covered by extended health benefits, so it is worth looking into whether therapy is covered through your work or other extended health insurance.

Difference between Social Workers, Psychiatrists, Psychologists & Psychotherapists

Generally, social workers who provide therapy have a background in social justice that informs their practice. Both social workers and psychotherapists can provide mental health assessments, psychoeducation/mental health education, and various mental health therapies. Psychologists are able to provide mental health therapy, as well as conduct mental health assessments and provide mental health diagnoses. Lastly, psychiatrists can do all of the above, as well as prescribe and manage mental health medications (1). If you're unsure which professional is right for you, book a session with Taddle Creek's Mental Health Team for personalized recommendations.



Finding a Therapist

Just as with friendships or careers, finding the right therapist can take time. If you've tried therapy before without success, don't get discouraged—research shows that a strong therapist-client relationship is key to success (2,3).

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1. Clarify Your Goals

Consider what you hope to gain from therapy. Some goals could include improving relationships, reducing anxiety, processing grief, or anything else that would feel meaningful for you. Having a goal can help narrow your search for a therapist with the right expertise, but is not necessary if you're not sure what your goals are.

2. What If I Don't Know What I Need?

That's okay! Therapy is a space to explore thoughts and emotions to uncover underlying issues. Therapists are skilled at helping you identify and work through challenges, even if you're unsure where to start.

3. Where to Look

There are numerous publicly funded and private providers offering individual, couple/relationship, and family therapy. A couple of places you can look for these options are 211 (<https://211ontario.ca/search/>) and Central Health Line (<https://www.centralhealthline.ca/>).

Popular online directories for finding private therapists include Psychology Today (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca>) and the Affordable Therapy Network for lower-cost options (<https://affordabletherapynetwork.com/>).

Regardless of your financial situation, you can book a free single session with Taddle Creek's Mental Health Team to receive information, resources, or referrals for therapy.

Questions to Ask a Potential Therapist

Most private therapists offer free consultation calls, which are highly recommended. Even if you like the first therapist you talk to, speaking with 2–3 others can allow you to compare and contrast different therapist qualities to help ensure that you find the best fit. Some questions you can ask a potential therapist include:

- What challenges do you typically support clients with?

- Do you have experience supporting clients with my background/identities/needs?
- What is your approach to helping clients?
- What do your sessions look like?
- How long do you typically work with clients?
- What is your availability?

Conclusion

Therapy provides a safe, confidential space for self-exploration, personal growth, and emotional well-being. No matter your concerns, therapy can be a valuable tool in improving your quality of life (4).

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4. Vitality Collective. Top 10 reasons why people seek therapy [Internet]. [place unknown]: Vitality Collective; [date unknown]. Available from: <https://www.vitalitycollective.ca/psychology-blog/top-10-reasons-to-seek-therapy>

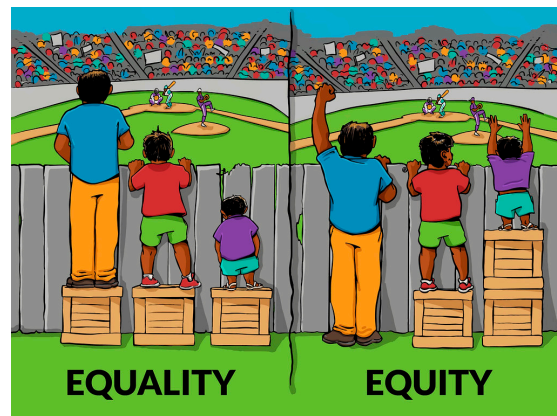
WHAT'S HAPPENING AT TADDLE CREEK

By: Cheryl Dobinson, Executive Director

This column provides information about Taddle Creek Family Health Team (TC FHT) events, program updates and announcements.

Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression Training

On January 28, 2025, we held a special two-hour training on anti-racism, anti-oppression, equity, diversity, and inclusion for the TC FHT team. This training was part of our Quality Improvement Plan initiatives this year related to health equity. It also supports our Strategic Plan key activities in terms of fostering spaces for the team to learn together. The training was facilitated by an external consultant, Rania El Mugammar, and was received very positively by the team. We will continue to develop and offer additional training in this area to build on this initial learning session and to help us work towards more equitable and supportive healthcare for all.



Mental Health Program Senior's Workshop – April 22, 2025

Our Mental Health Program offered an in-person workshop for seniors which was attended by nine patients. Topics discussed included: participants' opinions on healthy aging, dimensions of wellness and how to achieve them, community resources, and brainstorming on what the participants would like to see the Mental Health Program offer for seniors. Participants enjoyed connecting with each other over the three hours of the workshop and also discussed the possibility of continuing to stay in touch after the workshop was over.



Personnel Updates

Victoria Charko, Registered Nurse for Bay-Suite 522, has returned from maternity leave as of March 24. Welcome back! A special thank you to Nazneen Patel and Pauline Perri for completing Victoria's maternity leave contract.

Jessica Lam, Pharmacist, has started maternity leave as of May 9. Tania Ng will be starting on May 26 to provide coverage while Jessica is away. Tania is an experienced pharmacist who has held positions with Shoppers Drug Mart, CareRx, and Sunnybrook Odette Cancer Centre.

Physician Update

Please join me in welcoming Dr. Helena Xiao Liu to the team. She will be joining the physicians at the Bloor location starting May 1, 2025 and is bringing her practice with her.



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Taddle Creek

DIABETES
DIGEST

Diabetes and Alcohol:

What do you need to know?

By: Erin Krusky, Registered Dietitian and Certified Diabetes Educator

With patio season just around the corner, you might be thinking about having a refreshing glass of beer or a cocktail on a sunny day. Alcohol impacts our health in a number of ways, especially if we are working on managing our blood sugars. It's important to know how alcohol impacts our bodies and minds so we can make the best choices for our well-being.

How much alcohol is too much?

New Canadian guidelines came out in 2023 which recommend lower amounts of alcohol than in the past. These guidelines state that drinking less alcohol is better for health. In fact, one of the key messages is that no amount or kind of alcohol is good for health.

The guidelines recommend a maximum alcohol amount of **two** standard drinks per **week** for all adults:

One standard drink looks like:

- Beer 341 ml (12 oz)
5% alcohol
- Cooler/cider 341 ml (12 oz)
5% alcohol
- Wine 142 ml (5oz)
12% alcohol
- Spirits (whisky, vodka, gin etc.)
43 ml (1.5oz) of spirits
40% alcohol

Greater amounts of alcohol than 1-2 standard drinks per **week** can result in an increased risk of cancer, heart disease and stroke.

How does alcohol impact your blood sugars?

Alcohol can both increase and decrease your blood sugar levels depending on the situation. Beer and sweet wines contain carbohydrates that can cause blood sugar levels to rise. Alcohol can also cause dangerous low blood sugars up to 24 hours after drinking by keeping the liver busy breaking down the alcohol, which prevents the liver from releasing blood sugar when it is needed.

If alcohol is consumed on an empty stomach and you are a person with diabetes who takes insulin or certain oral medications that lower blood sugars, you can be at risk for a low blood sugar reaction. Talk to your diabetes educator to discuss whether drinking alcohol is safe for you, especially if you are taking diabetes medications.

What can you do if you want to reduce your alcohol intake?

Talk to your health care team about your alcohol intake to explore how it might be impacting your health. Your health care team can help you develop an individualized plan to manage your alcohol intake.



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Ways to reduce your alcohol intake could include:

- Try out other ways to wind down without alcohol like going for a walk, stretching or listening to music.
- Have some water at the same time you have an alcoholic drink to hydrate and reduce your overall alcohol intake.
- Instead of cutting out alcohol all at once set goals to reduce your intake, such as "I will have 3 alcohol-free days a week" to begin.

The good news is that any reduction in alcoholic drinks per week has benefits to your wellness. These benefits include better quality sleep, improved brain health, more stable mood and greater energy to focus on what you value most in life.

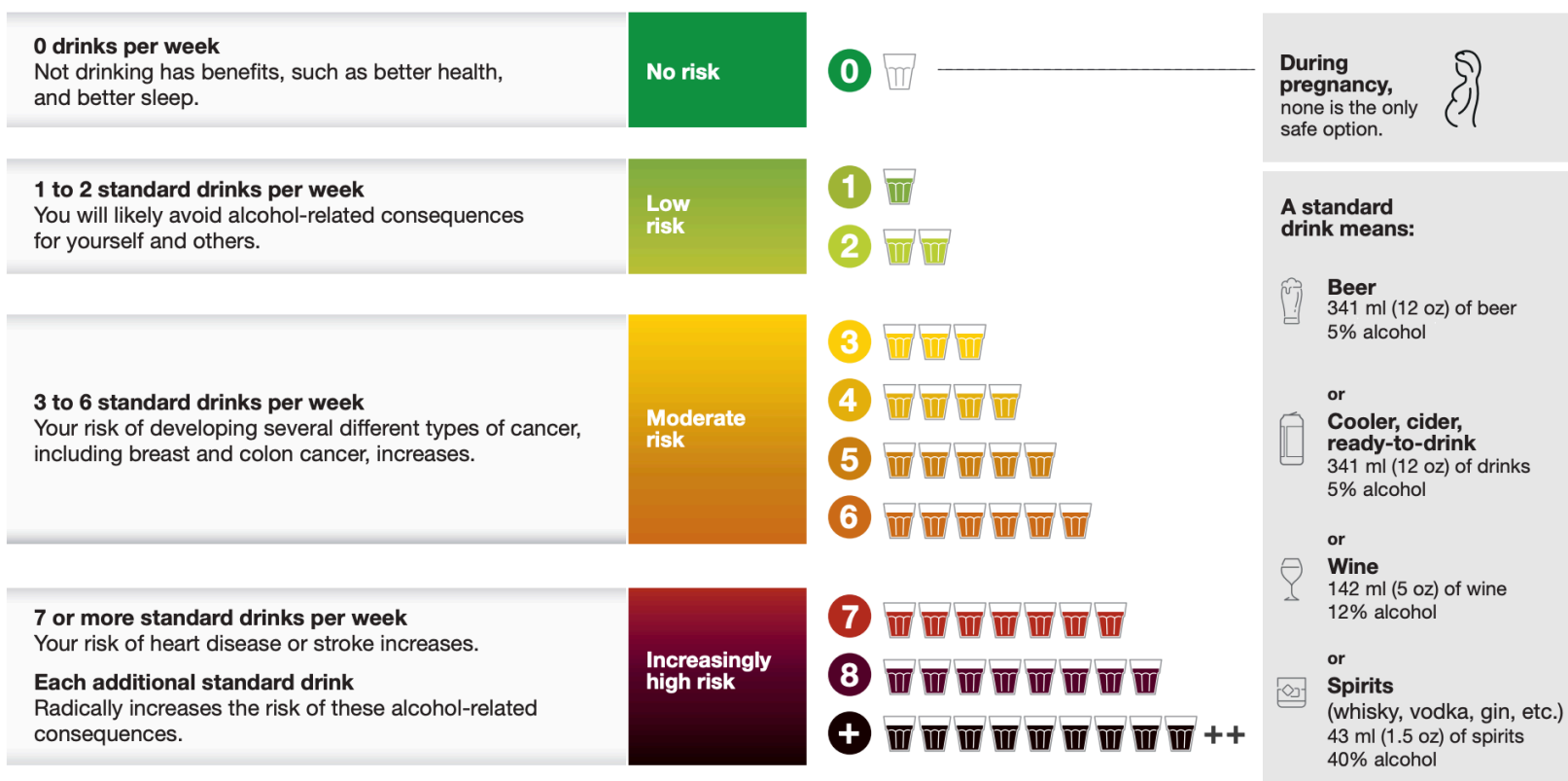


Image from Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health

References:

Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health

<https://www.ccsa.ca/canadas-guidance-alcohol-and-health>

Diabetes and Drinking:

<https://diabetes.ca/about-diabetes/impact-stories/diabetes-and-drinking>

10 smart ways to Limit Alcohol:

<https://cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/reduce-your-risk/limit-alcohol/10-smart-ways-to-limit-alcohol>

How Alcohol Affects your Sleep

<https://www.ncoa.org/article/how-alcohol-affects-your-sleep/>

Brain-health tips to reduce your risk of dementia

<https://alzheimer.ca/en/about-dementia/how-can-i-reduce-risk-dementia/brain-healthy-tips-reduce-your-risk-dementia>

Iron Deficiency Anemia & How to Take Iron Supplements



By: Pharmacists Jessica Lam and Shawn Goodman

What is Iron Deficiency Anemia?

Iron is a mineral that helps your body make red blood cells. These cells carry oxygen all over your body. If you don't have enough iron, you may feel very tired, weak, or short of breath.

Iron deficiency happens when your body doesn't have enough iron. If this lasts too long, it can turn into **iron deficiency anemia (IDA)**. This means your red blood cell levels are too low, and your body isn't getting enough oxygen.

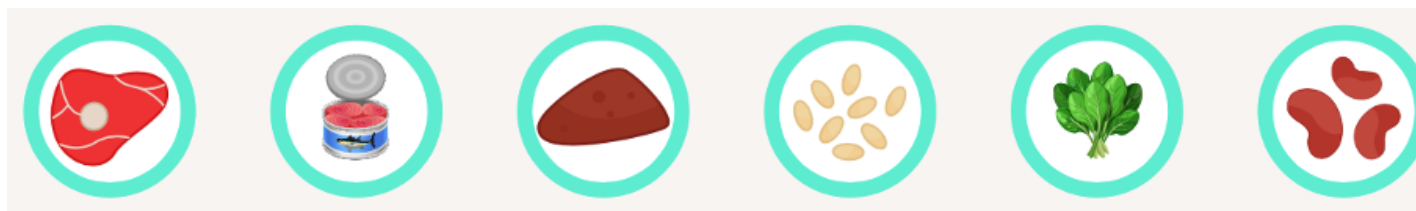
Who is at Risk?

- **People with low-iron diets** (vegetarians and vegans need more iron than they may get from their regular diets).
- **People with medical conditions** that affect iron absorption, like celiac disease or stomach ulcers.
- **People losing blood**, such as from heavy periods, pregnancy, kidney disease, surgery, or bleeding disorders.
- **People taking certain medicines**, like aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil), naproxen (Aleve), or blood thinners (warfarin, apixaban, rivaroxaban).

How Can I Get More Iron from Food?

There are two types of iron in food:

- **Heme iron** (from animal sources) – found in meat, fish, and poultry. This type is best absorbed.
- **Non-heme iron** (from plant sources) – found in beans, lentils, tofu, whole grains, nuts, seeds, and dark green vegetables. This type is harder to absorb.



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What Iron Supplement Should I Take?

Your health care provider can help you choose the right iron supplement if they determine that this is recommended for you. Common types include:

Iron Type	Strength (mg)	Iron Content (mg/tablet)	Doses per Day
Ferrous Gluconate	300	35	1 to 3
Ferrous Sulfate	300	60	1 to 3
Ferrous Fumarate (e.g., Palafer, Eurofer)	300	100	1 to 2
Heme Iron Polypeptide (e.g., Proferrin)	11	11	3
Polysaccharide-Iron Complex (e.g., FeraMAX)	150	150	1

How to Take Iron for Best Absorption

- Take iron on an empty stomach (2 hours before or 4 hours after eating) if possible.
 - Taking iron at bedtime may reduce side effects such as stomach upset.
- If it upsets your stomach, take it with a small meal.
- Do not take iron with:
 - Dairy (milk, cheese, yogurt)
 - Coffee, tea, or high-fiber foods
 - Antacids, calcium, or some medications (ask your prescriber or pharmacist).
- Taking iron every other day (e.g., Monday, Wednesday, Friday) may improve absorption and reduce side effects.
- You don't need vitamin C to help absorb iron—new studies show it doesn't make a big difference.



Side Effects of Iron Supplements

- Upset stomach (nausea, bloating, gas)
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Metallic taste
- Black or dark green stools (this is normal, but can stain clothes)

If side effects are a problem, talk to your prescriber about switching to a different iron type.

Can Cooking Help Increase My Iron?

- Cooking with a cast iron pan or using a Lucky Iron Fish may help add iron to your food.
- This can be helpful, but it's not enough to treat anemia.

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How Will I Know if My Iron Levels Are Getting Better?

- After starting to take a supplement, it takes 6-8 weeks to feel better and improve your iron levels.
- Your doctor may check your iron in 6-8 weeks to make sure it is working.
- Keep taking iron for several months after your levels are normal to build up iron stores.

If you have questions, talk to your health care provider or pharmacist. Taking iron the right way can help you feel better faster!

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THE TADDLER

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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:

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

Spring - Summer 2025 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
Mental Health Program			
Assertiveness Workshop In-person Note: Registration opens on May 5 at 9:00 am. It is first come, first served. Call 416-260-1315 ext. 0	June 20, 2025	12:30 pm - 4:00 pm	The assertiveness workshop is an educational group to provide information and strategies to help individuals better understand and develop techniques for assertive communication. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand how to define assertiveness • Learn about the spectrum between passive to aggressive communication • Explore the importance of boundaries and why they are valid • Learn tools for building assertive communication skills
Seniors' Workshop In-person Note: Registration opens on June 9 at 9:00 am. It is first come, first served. Call 416-260-1315 ext. 0	July 15, 2025	1:00 pm - 4:00 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small interactive group for those aged 65+ who are interested in connecting with other seniors • Topics discussed may include: making/maintaining connections with others, discussions around aging, navigating community resources, and more • Some snacks and beverages will be provided
CBT-Insomnia Cafe In-person Note: Need to have taken the CBT-I group. Registration opens on July 14 at 9:00 am. It is first come, first served. Call 416-260-1315 ext. 0	August 22, 2025	1:00 pm to 3:00 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A workshop for people who have completed the CBT-Insomnia Group at Taddle Creek FHT • Provides a chance to connect with others who struggle with insomnia, share ideas and coping strategies, and brush up on CBT-I strategies • Combines both peer-support and psycho-education by the facilitators

Event	Date(s)	Time	Learn About/Assistance With
Diabetes Education Program			
Blood Sugar Management Workshop	May 7, 2025 (Part 1) May 14, 2025 (Part 2)	Wednesdays 9:00 - 11:00 am 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.
Virtual	May 22, 2025 (Part 1) May 29, 2025 (Part 2)	Thursdays 5:00 - 7:00 pm 5:00 - 7:00 pm	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?
Eligibility Criteria: Must have Prediabetes or Diabetes and be referred to the diabetes education program by your primary care provider	June 4, 2025 (Part 1) June 11, 2025 (Part 2)	Wednesdays 9:00 - 11:00 am 9:00 - 11:00 am	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?
	June 12, 2025 (Part 1) June 19, 2025 (Part 2)	Thursdays 5:00 - 7:00 pm 5:00 - 7:00 pm	
	July 10, 2025 (Part 1) July 17, 2025 (Part 2)	Thursdays 5:00 - 7:00 pm 5:00 - 7:00 pm	
	July 16, 2025 (Part 1) July 23, 2025 (Part 2)	Wednesdays 9:00 - 11:00 am 9:00 - 11:00 am	
	August 6, 2025 (Part 1) August 13, 2025 (Part 2)	Wednesdays 9:00 - 11:00 am 9:00 - 11:00 am	
	August 21, 2025 (Part 1) August 28, 2025 (Part 2)	Thursdays 5:00 - 7:00 pm 5:00 - 7:00 pm	

Event	Date(s)	Time	Learn About/Assistance With
Blood Sugar Management Workshop (Cont'd)	August 21, 2025 (Part 1)	Thursdays 5:00 - 7:00 pm	
	August 28, 2025 (Part 2)	5:00 - 7:00 pm	
	September 10, 2025 (Part 1)	Wednesdays 9:00 - 11:00 am	
	September 17, 2025 (Part 2)	9:00 - 11:00 am	
	September 18th, 2025 (Part 1) September 25th, 2025 (Part 2)	Thursdays 5:00 - 7:00 pm 5:00 - 7:00 pm	
Intuitive Eating with Diabetes Group Note: Must have Prediabetes or Diabetes and be referred to the diabetes education program by your primary care provider Call 416-204-1256 ext. 0 to register	October 15, 2025 (Part 1) October 22, 2025 (Part 2)	Wednesdays 9:00 - 11:00 am 9:00 - 11:00 am	<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 stress around managing diabetes
	Tuesday, May 6, 2025 In-person	4:00 -6:30 pm 790 Bay St., Suite 508	
	Tuesday, May 13, 2025 Virtual	4:00 -6:30 pm Zoom	
	Tuesday, May 20, 2025 Virtual	4:00 -6:30 pm Zoom	
	Tuesday, May 27, 2025 Virtual	4:00 -6:30 pm Zoom	
	Tuesday, June 3, 2025 Virtual	4:00 -6:30 pm Zoom	
	Tuesday, June 10, 2025 In-person	4:00 -6:30 pm 790 Bay St., Suite 508	

Event	Date(s)	Time	Learn About/Assistance With
Nutrition Program			
Mindful Nutrition Group Virtual Note: Call to enroll - 416-260-1315 ext. 0.	September 17, 2025 - October 29, 2025 7 sessions to complete	Wednesdays 5:30 - 7:00 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in mindful eating practices • Healthier relationship with food and your body • Adoption of intuitive eating principles • Decrease in emotional eating episodes