



# Newsletter

November – December 2023

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## *Clinic Reminders*

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Flu shots are here and we encourage all our patients to get the flu shot to protect yourself, your family, and your community.

The Toronto Western Family Health Team has a limited capacity to offer flu shots directly. We will do our best to offer as many vaccines as we can. Given our limited capacity, if you can safely and conveniently get your flu shot elsewhere – we encourage you to do so.

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## *Clinic Updates*

### **Welcome Dr. Sivapatham!**

Dr. Gabilan Sivapatham is a new family physician at the Toronto Western Hospital Family Health Team. He completed his undergraduate studies at the University of Toronto in Global Health and graduate studies in Adult Education and Community Development. He earned his medical degree at the University of Saskatchewan and completed his residency training in family medicine at St. Michael's Hospital. He is looking forward to building a diverse practice over the coming years.



## Flu Shots

Flu shots are available NOW. We encourage you to get your flu shot. The flu shot is recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older. The flu shot is:

- **safe** (including for kids and if you are pregnant or breastfeeding)
- **free**
- **proven** to reduce the number of doctor visits, hospitalizations & deaths related to the flu
- **different** each year because the virus changes frequently – so you need to get it every fall ([Ontario Ministry of Health](#))

### Where can I get my Flu Shot?

**1. Toronto Public Health (TPH)** is operating flu clinics around the city. To book your appointment with TPH [click here](#).

**2. Pharmacies** are offering regular and high dose flu shots for anyone over 2 years old. If your child is under 2, please book an appointment at our clinic.

**3. The TW FHT** is currently offering regular and high dose flu shots to TW FHT patients over the age of 6 months. [Click here](#) for more information about available flu shot clinics.

### Why should I get a Flu Shot?

The flu shot is your best defence against the flu. The flu shot helps to protect you if you get exposed to the influenza virus.

The flu shot helps to:

- prevent you from getting very sick from flu-related complications
- protect people close to you because, when vaccinated, you're less likely to spread the virus to others
- reduce the overall burden on the health care system during respiratory virus season

## Resources

[Flu \(influenza\): Government of Canada](#)  
[Flu Shots – Frequently Asked Questions](#)



COVID shots are also available at [Toronto Public Health clinics](#) and at many [pharmacies](#) across the GTA.

# Tips to Avoid Getting Sick This Fall/ Winter

In addition to getting your flu shot, there are other measures you can take to reduce the risk of illness:

## Wash your hands often

- Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 15 seconds
- If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer with at least 70% alcohol
- [Click here](#) to learn how to wash your hands effectively

## Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze

- Sneeze or cough into a tissue and throw the tissue out right away!
- When you do not have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve

## Don't touch your face

- Droplets from viruses enter your body through your eyes, nose or mouth
- Especially when you are out in public, don't touch your face until you wash your hands

## Clean surfaces and shared items

- Viruses can live up to 2 days on surfaces, such as door handles, phones, or light switches
- Try to clean these surfaces often

## Stay home if you are sick or starting to feel sick

- To stop the spread of viruses

## What if I get sick with a virus?

Remember that viruses can often be treated at home, and without antibiotics. [Click here](#) to review how you can manage different viruses at home and know when to seek medical attention.

If you have small children and want to prepare for the cold and flu season, join our **Managing Your Child's Cold and Flu Symptoms** online workshop on Wednesday, November 8<sup>th</sup> from 12-1 pm. [Click here](#) for more information.

# Menopause

## What is menopause?

Menopause is a life transition that all women experience as they age. A woman has entered menopause when they have had no menstrual period for *one full year*. Symptoms of menopause often start many years prior to this. This time is called **perimenopause** (meaning around menopause). Emotional and physical symptoms of perimenopause typically start in a woman's late 40's or early 50s but can start even earlier.

*Menopause has traditionally been a health topic that was ignored by the medical community and greater society but there is now greater societal interest in women understanding their health and being in control of their quality of life.*

## What symptoms can I expect with menopause?

No two women experience menopause in the same way. Some may have difficulties, while others may be symptom-free.

Generally, fluctuating hormone levels may lead to the following symptoms:

- Irregular periods
- Night sweats
- Hot flashes
- Fatigue
- Aches and pains in the joints
- Change in sexual desire
- Changes to skin texture and appearance
- Bladder control difficulty
- Vaginal fluid changes (dryness)
- Disruption of sleep patterns (difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep)
- Mood swings
- Memory Losses

## Treatment Options

We encourage you to book an appointment with your primary care provider if you have questions about menopause and want to learn about treatment options.

## Additional Online Resources

[Menopause and U](#)

[The North American Menopause Society](#)

The best way to manage menopause is to learn the facts, risks and benefits of available treatments for symptoms during this transition period. Talk to your primary care provider about which treatment options are best for you.

## LIFESTYLE MODIFICATIONS TO ASSIST WITH SYMPTOMS

Taking care of yourself and refocusing on your overall health is more important than ever.

### Healthy Lifestyle

A healthy lifestyle helps counter some of the health issues that arise with perimenopause and menopause.

### Healthy Diet

As much as possible, choose a healthy diet, try to establish an active lifestyle, manage weight and stress, and limit your consumption of alcohol, cigarettes and caffeine.

## HORMONE THERAPY



Hormone therapy (HT) is often the single most effective treatment for disruptive menopausal symptoms.

There has been much written about HT. Current research confirms that hormone therapy is a safe and effective way to treat moderate to severe symptoms of menopause, such as hot flashes, night sweats, mood

swings, insomnia, difficulty concentrating, and vaginal dryness.

Careful analysis of the research indicates that the benefits of HT outweigh the risks for healthy women who start HT within the first ten years of menopause onset.

## IF HORMONE THERAPY IS NOT AN OPTION

For some women, hormone therapy is not an option. Other prescription medications can be effective treatments for hot flashes. Talk with your health care provider to find out which method is best for you.

Visit [MenopauseandU.ca](https://MenopauseandU.ca) to learn more



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# National Addictions Awareness Week

National Addictions Awareness Week (NAAW) is November 19 to 25. This week's goal is to spark conversation about problematic substance use:

*“To increase awareness of causes and prevention of harms, options for support, and solutions for change.”*

## When is substance use a problem?

People use substances for different reasons, including:

- medical purposes
- religious or ceremonial purposes
- personal enjoyment
- to cope with stress, trauma or pain

Use is different for everyone and can be viewed on a spectrum with varying stages of benefits and harms. Substance use is considered problematic when use becomes compulsive and continuous despite negative impacts to a person, their family and others.

## Why do people keep using?

Substance use can be hard to change for many reasons, including:

- Immediate effects of substance use tend to be positive in that people may feel good, have more confidence and forget about problems
- Problems from use might not be obvious for some time.

- People may come to rely on the effects of substances to bring short-term relief from difficult or painful feelings. Use can become a habit, which can be hard to break.
- If people develop physical dependence and then stop using, they may experience distressing symptoms of withdrawal.
- Continued substance use, especially heavy use, can cause changes in the body and brain. These changes may be lasting and may be why people slip back into substance use long after they have stopped using.
- Stigma makes it hard to reach out for help. Help end stigma by learning more [here](#).

## Want to learn more about addiction?

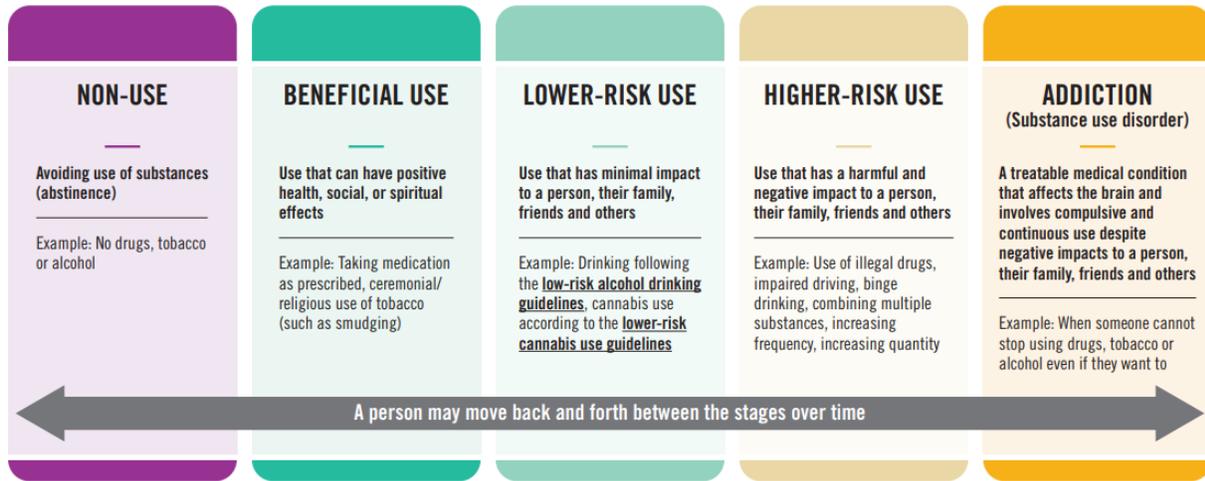
[Addiction: An information guide \(camh.ca\)](#)

[Substance Use - Canada.ca](#)

[National Addictions Awareness Week \(ccsa.ca\)](#)

# SUBSTANCE USE SPECTRUM

People use substances, such as **controlled and illegal drugs**, **cannabis**, **tobacco/nicotine** and **alcohol** for different reasons, including medical purposes; religious or ceremonial purposes; personal enjoyment; or to cope with stress, trauma or pain. Substance use is different for everyone and can be viewed on a spectrum with varying stages of benefits and harms.



Learn more about the substance use spectrum [here](#).

## How can I get help?

We encourage you to book an appointment with your primary care provider if you need help with an addiction. If you feel that substance use is causing problems in your life and that you are unable to control your use you should see a trained counsellor for an assessment. Treatment options can include self-help, peer support, counselling, harm reduction strategies, medications and withdrawal management.

## To get help:

- Book an appointment with your primary care provider to discuss concerns about your substance use.
- [CAMH](#) can help individuals with problematic substance use as well as their families. Call Access CAMH at 416-535-8501, option 2 to get started.
- [Wellness Together Canada](#) offers immediate, free and confidential mental health and substance use help 24/7. Call 1-866-585-0445 or TEXT:
  - Adults text WELLNESS to 741741,
  - Youth text WELLNESS to 686868
  - Frontline workers text FRONTLINE to 741741

For a comprehensive list of Canada-wide options, [click here](#).

# Patient Health Needs Survey

## Join us in shaping the future of our health promotion initiative!

We value your input as a member of the TW FHT community. We are inviting you to take a survey as part of a project to learn more about your health needs. Your feedback will help us create educational sessions or workshops that focus on health topics that matter most to you. Different health professionals (e.g., nurses, pharmacists, social workers, physicians) will run these workshops at our clinic.

To participate, please [click here](#). This will give you access to the electronic consent form and the survey. It will only take about 5-7 minutes, and your answers are confidential and anonymous.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact us at [navaldeep.kaur@uhn.ca](mailto:navaldeep.kaur@uhn.ca).

Thank you for your time and contribution!



# Upcoming Health Education Workshops



Toronto Western  
Family Health Team

Garrison Creek  
Bathurst

## **TW Family Health Team** **Fall 2023 Health Education** FREE workshops & easy online registration

**Nov**

**8**

**5:30 pm**

### ***Sleep Therapy Fundamentals: Part II***

Are you having trouble sleeping, such as falling or staying asleep? This virtual series is for patients and caregivers who want to learn how to improve their sleep without medications.

Presented by Jadie (Pharmacist) & Laurel (Social Worker), [click here to register](#)

**Nov**

**8**

**12 pm**

### ***Managing Your Child's Cold & Flu Symptoms***

Do you have a young child? Are you prepared for this cold and flu season? Join this virtual session to learn homecare measures and understand when to seek medical care.

Presented by Adrienne (Nurse), [click here to register](#)

**Nov**

**22**

**1:30 pm**

### ***Preventing Falls: Staying Strong & Steady***

Have you had a fall or are you afraid of falling? Are you curious to learn what you can do to prevent a fall? Join us for this in-person workshop at our Bathurst Site.

Presented by Jenn (Occupational Therapist) & Julie (Physiotherapist), [click here to register](#)

**Nov**

**30**

**12 pm**

### ***Stress Less***

Are you feeling stressed? Do you want to learn how to cope and manage your stress? Join us for our virtual Stress Less workshop.

Presented by Sae (Nurse Practitioner) and Olivia (Registered Nurse), [click here to register](#)

**Dec**

**6**

**12 pm**

### ***Learning About Mental Health Care Services in Ontario***

Are you struggling with your mental health or living with someone who has mental health problems? Do you want to learn where to find help? Join this virtual session and learn how to access mental health care services.

Presented by Lina (Social Worker), [click here to register](#)

Visit our website for more information and take a closer look at our Health Education Workshops Calendar

[www.twfht.ca](http://www.twfht.ca)





## Trans Experience in Health Care

### Topics

- Increase awareness about barriers trans people face when accessing health care
- How to support trans family, friends, colleagues and patients
- Tips on how to advocate, assist and ally with trans people

### Presenters

- **Patient Guest Speaker - Kylie Feistmantl**, Twitch streamer
- **Dr. Ian Armstrong** - Family Doctor, Maple Leaf Medical Clinic
- **Dr. Tessa Ringer** - Emergency Department Doctor, Toronto General Hospital

### How to participate

Submit your questions by **Friday, November 10th** at:

[slido.com/UHNHealthTalk](https://slido.com/UHNHealthTalk)

### Date and time

This virtual presentation will be released on YouTube on:

**Monday November 20th, 2023**



Watch this recording and past events at:

[bit.ly/UHNHealthTalksPlaylist](https://bit.ly/UHNHealthTalksPlaylist) or scan the QR code using your smartphone camera or a QR code scanner app

For more information, email [pfep@uhn.ca](mailto:pfep@uhn.ca) or call 416 603 6290



## Contact Us



Phone: 416 603 5888



Website: twfht.ca



### Location

Bathurst Site: 440 Bathurst Street



Do you have feedback about our newsletter?

Do you want to learn more about other health education topics?

If so, [click here](#) to give us your feedback