

Toronto Western
Family Health Team
*Garrison Creek
Bathurst*

TW FHT Newsletter

September 2026

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Updates to Colon Cancer Screening

Your next bathroom break could change your life

The fecal immunochemical test (FIT) is a safe, painless at-home colon cancer test. Ask your family doctor or nurse practitioner about it.

If you do not have a family doctor or nurse practitioner, call Health811 (TTY: 1-866-797-0007) to get your free ColonCancerCheck FIT kit.



To learn more, visit
ontariohealth.ca/colorectal



Ontario Health
Cancer Care Ontario

Need this information in an accessible format? 1-877-302-4658, TTY: 1-800-495-0011, info@ontariohealth.ca
Document disponible en français au contact de info@ontariohealth.ca. CDP-18-001

Cancer screening is testing done on people who are at risk of getting cancer, but who have no symptoms and generally feel fine. Cancer screening can detect cancer at an early stage when there is a better chance of successful treatment. It is important to have these tests even if you feel fine and you have a healthy lifestyle. They are part of your regular medical care.

The Toronto Western Family Health Team operates a number of programs and initiatives to screen for cancer. Early detection plays a key role in successful cancer treatment, and these screening programs are designed to help identify cancer as early as possible. [Cancer Screening](#)

New updates to colon cancer (colorectal) screening

As of July 1, 2026, the eligibility age for publicly funded colon cancer screening was lowered:

- From 50 to age 45 for all individuals
- To age 40 for individuals at increased risk

[Read more about the update to the screening program.](#)

Why is this happening?

This expansion will help over 1 million additional people connect to important screening services to detect and treat colon cancer sooner.

Your risk assessment:

You are at **average risk** for getting colon cancer, if you are [ages 45 to 74 and have:](#)

- no personal history of colorectal cancer, pre-cancerous colorectal polyps needing surveillance, Crohn's disease involving the colon or ulcerative colitis, **and**

- no first-degree relatives (parents, siblings or children) diagnosed with colorectal cancer, **or**
- any of the following types of family history:
 - only 1 first-degree relative diagnosed with colorectal cancer at age 60 or older
 - one or more first-degree relatives diagnosed with colorectal polyps, including high risk adenomas and polyps of unknown histology
 - one or more second-degree relatives, including grandparents, grandchildren, nieces and nephews) and aunts and uncles), diagnosed with colorectal cancer or colorectal polyps at any age

You are **at increased risk** for getting colon cancer, if you have a family history of colon cancer that includes:

- only 1 first-degree relative (parent, sibling or child) diagnosed with colorectal cancer **before age 60**, or
- two or more first-degree relatives diagnosed with colorectal cancer at any age.

Colorectal Cancer Screening Recommendations Summary | Cancer Care Ontario

Colon Cancer Screening tests:

The colon cancer screening done will depend on your risk:

- **Get checked: average risk (at-home test)**
 - You can do an easy-to-use at-home test, called a fecal immunochemical test (FIT), **if you are at average risk** of getting colon cancer.
- **Get checked: increased risk (colonoscopy)**
 - A colonoscopy is an exam where a doctor looks at the lining of the entire colon using a long, flexible tube with a tiny camera on the end.

- Learn more about these screening tests: [Colon cancer testing and prevention | ontario.ca](#)

What should you do?

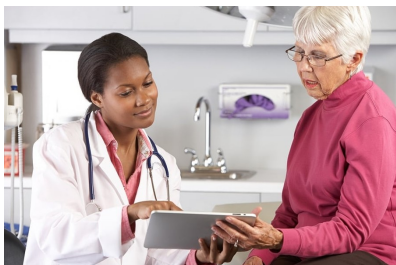
- Review whether you are at increased risk or average risk.
- Talk to your primary care provider about your colon cancer risk and next steps.

Online Resources

- [Colon Cancer Screening](#)
- [Ontario Lowering Eligibility Age for Life-Saving Colon Cancer Screening | Ontario Newsroom](#)
- [Colon cancer testing and prevention | Ontario.ca](#)
- [Colorectal Cancer Screening Recommendations Summary | Cancer Care Ontario](#)

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Preventive Care Visits



What is a Preventive Care Visit?

A preventive care visit is an opportunity to review your overall health and make sure you are up to date with recommended screenings, tests, and immunizations. These visits focus on maintaining your health, preventing illness, and identifying potential concerns before they become more serious.

During your Preventive Care Visit

During your visit, your healthcare provider may review:

- Your personal and family medical history
- Current medications and allergies
- Lifestyle factors such as nutrition, physical activity, sleep, smoking, and alcohol use
- Recommended cancer screenings (such as cervical, breast, or colorectal cancer screening)
- Screening for conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol
- Mental health and emotional well-being
- Immunizations (vaccines)
- Preventive care recommendations based on your age, sex, medical history, and risk factors

Before your Preventive Care Visit

To make the most of your appointment, we will send you a questionnaire by email before your visit. Please complete it to provide any updates about your health, medications, and medical history.

Please note:

- Preventive care visits are designed to focus on health maintenance and screening. Because there is a lot to review during these appointments, there may not be enough time to address new or ongoing medical concerns in detail.
- **If you have a specific health issue, new symptoms, or concerns you would like to discuss, please book a separate appointment with your healthcare provider.**

How to Book a Preventive Care Visit

Call our clinic at 416-603-5888 to book your preventive care visit with a member of our reception team. These visits cannot be booked online at this time.

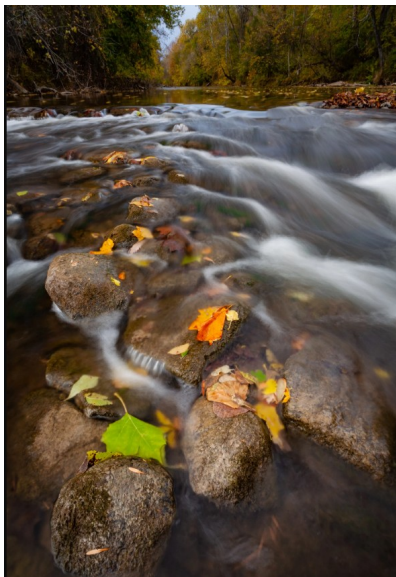
Online Resources

- [Health Check-ups](#) - learn when you need preventive care visits and when you don't
- [Cancer Screening](#) - learn about latest guidelines and recommendations
- [Health Resources](#) - learn about health related topics
- [Immunizations](#) - learn about vaccines and recommendations
- [Preparing for a Visit with Your Primary Care Provider](#)
- [Search for Health Information Online](#)

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Health Promotion: Health Topics

Cognitive Defusion: A Technique for Working with Challenging Thoughts



Marcus Aurelius once said *"The happiness of your life depends upon the quality of your thoughts."* While this quote does not fully consider real-life circumstances and challenges that affect wellbeing, it is true that our minds have a powerful influence on our mental health.

We can easily fall into cycles of anxious or negative thinking that can create a lot of suffering in our lives. One way this happens is through something called **cognitive fusion**. Fusion is a key concept from a type of psychotherapy called **Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)**.

What does fusion mean?

Fusion happens when we get so caught up in our thoughts that we treat them as facts or rules that we must follow. We don't see the thoughts for what they really are: words and mental events.

When fused, a thought like "I am a failure" feels like a fact, not like a thought.

Why is this a problem?

When we are fused with our difficult thoughts, anxiety and depression often become worse. This can lead us to avoid situations or act in ways that are not helpful. If we get hooked by negative thoughts, it is harder for us to take positive action towards a meaningful life.

The opposite of fusion is **cognitive defusion**.

What is cognitive defusion?

Defusion helps us take a step back from our thoughts and see them more clearly. It reduces their power, and treats difficult thoughts like mental events, instead of accurate representations of reality.

When we realize that thoughts do not control us, we have more freedom to choose how we respond to thoughts.

For example:

Fusion	Defusion
I am a failure	I am having the thought "I am a failure"

There are many different ways to practice defusion. Here are a few to try:

1. Add the phrase *"I am having the thought that..."* before a difficult thought.
2. Practice mindfulness exercises, like a "Leaves on a Stream" practice. See below.
3. Frame a common worry or challenge as a story. For example *"Here is the 'I'm Not Good Enough' story again"* or *"There's the 'Nobody Likes Me' story."*
4. Thank your mind. For example: *"Thanks, mind, for trying to keep me safe by sending me these anxious thoughts. I hear your warnings but I'm going to leave my house anyways because I know it is good for me."*
5. Say or sing the thought in a silly voice.

Leaves on a Stream Mindfulness Exercise

1. Sit in a comfortable position and close your eyes or unfocus your gaze.
2. Imagine yourself sitting by a gently flowing stream with leaves floating on the surface of the water .
3. For the next few minutes, whenever you catch a thought arising, imagine placing the thought on a leaf and watching it float away.
4. Do this with each thought, not just the negative ones, include the neutral or positive ones.
5. Some thoughts might get stuck or keep coming back. This is normal. Simply place the thoughts on a leaf again and watch them float by.

*This will take practice! In time, it will become easier to let go of thoughts.

Important:

The goal of defusion is not to get rid of challenging or difficult thoughts. If we could eliminate thoughts, then we would have done so a long time ago! Instead, the goal is to change our relationship to thoughts so they have less influence over our actions.

If you would like to learn more about this concept and other ACT skills, please see our website for [ACTivate Your Life](#) group offered at TW FHT.

Written by Social Worker Michelle Burandt.

Online Resources

[ACTivate Your Life](#) - Mental Health Group at TW FHT

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Move More, Feel Better



Regular physical activity is one of the best things you can do for your health. It can improve your mood, boost your energy, reduce stress, strengthen your heart and muscles, and lower your risk of chronic conditions such as heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and some cancers.

How much activity do people need?

How much physical activity you need is based on your age:

Adults 65 years and older should aim for:

- At least 150 minutes (2.5 hours) of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity each week, broken into sessions of 10 minutes or more
- Muscle and bone strengthening activities at least 2 days per week

[Physical activity tips for older adults \(65 years and older\) - Canada.ca](#)

Adults aged 18–64 should aim for:

- At least 150 minutes (2.5 hours) of moderate to vigorous physical activity each week
- Activities that strengthen muscles and bones at least 2 days per week

[Physical Activity Tips for Adults \(18-64 years\) - Canada.ca](#)

Youth aged 12–17 should aim for:

- At least 60 minutes of physical activity every day
- To build strong muscles and bones, youth should also include vigorous activities and strengthening exercises at least 3 days per week.

[Physical activity tips for youth \(12-17 years\) - Canada.ca](#)

Children 5 to 11 should aim for:

- At least 60 minutes of physical activity each day
- Vigorous activities at least 3 days per week
- Muscle-and bone-strengthening activities (such as climbing, playground activities, jumping rope and other active play) at least 3 days per week

What counts as physical activity?

Moderate-intensity activities make you breathe a little harder and raise your heart rate. You can still talk, but not sing.

Examples include:

- Brisk walking (walking fast)
- Riding a bike on level ground
- Doing water aerobics

Vigorous-intensity activities make you breathe hard enough that talking becomes difficult. Examples are:

- Running or jogging
- Playing soccer or basketball
- Riding a bike fast or on hills
- Swimming laps

Strengthening activities help build muscles and maintain strong bones. Examples include:

- Lifting weights
- Push-ups and sit-ups
- Climbing stairs
- Yoga
- Gardening

Simple ways to get started:

- Choose activities you enjoy.
- Schedule activity into your week.
- Walk, bike, or use active transportation whenever possible.

- Be active with friends, family, or a group.
- Reduce time spent sitting, watching TV, or using screens during leisure time.
- Start small, even a little activity is better than none.

Remember: Every Step Counts

If you're not currently active, don't worry. Small changes can make a big difference. Start where you are and gradually build up your activity level.

Being active regularly can help you live longer, feel healthier, and improve your overall well-being.

Online Resources

- [Tips to get active: 18 to 64](#)
- [Tips to get active: 12 to 17](#)
- [Tips to get active: 5 to 11](#)
- [Healthy living - Canada.ca](#)
- [What Counts as Physical Activity for Adults | Physical Activity Basics | CDC](#)

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Mental Health Groups at TW FHT
ACTivate Your Life



This 6-week Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) group is for patients of the TW FHT who are experiencing challenges with physical and/or mental health conditions.

This group will give you a new perspective on your troubles by helping you to open up to difficult thoughts and feelings while doing what really matters to you.

The facilitators will complete a brief phone intake with you to confirm suitability for this group. If interested and available to attend all 6 sessions, please sign-up below.

Space is limited.

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Sign up for this group

Upcoming Health Education Workshops September 2026

TW FHT Monthly Program Calendar

Staying Safe Online: The Basics (Online)



Learn about the potential risks of your online activities and how you can stay safe when you are connected. Join us for tips for using the internet and staying safe online!

Sign up for this workshop

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Dealing with Depression (Online)



Learn more about depression and its effects on daily life and well-being. This workshop will review Major Depressive Disorder including signs and symptoms, treatments and self-care strategies.

[Sign up for this workshop](#)

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Gut Health 101 Nutrition Workshop for Digestive Health (Online)



Gut Health 101 is all about understanding and taking care of your digestive system!

In this workshop, we will discuss common digestive issues and share tips for keeping your digestive system running smoothly.

[Sign up for this workshop](#)

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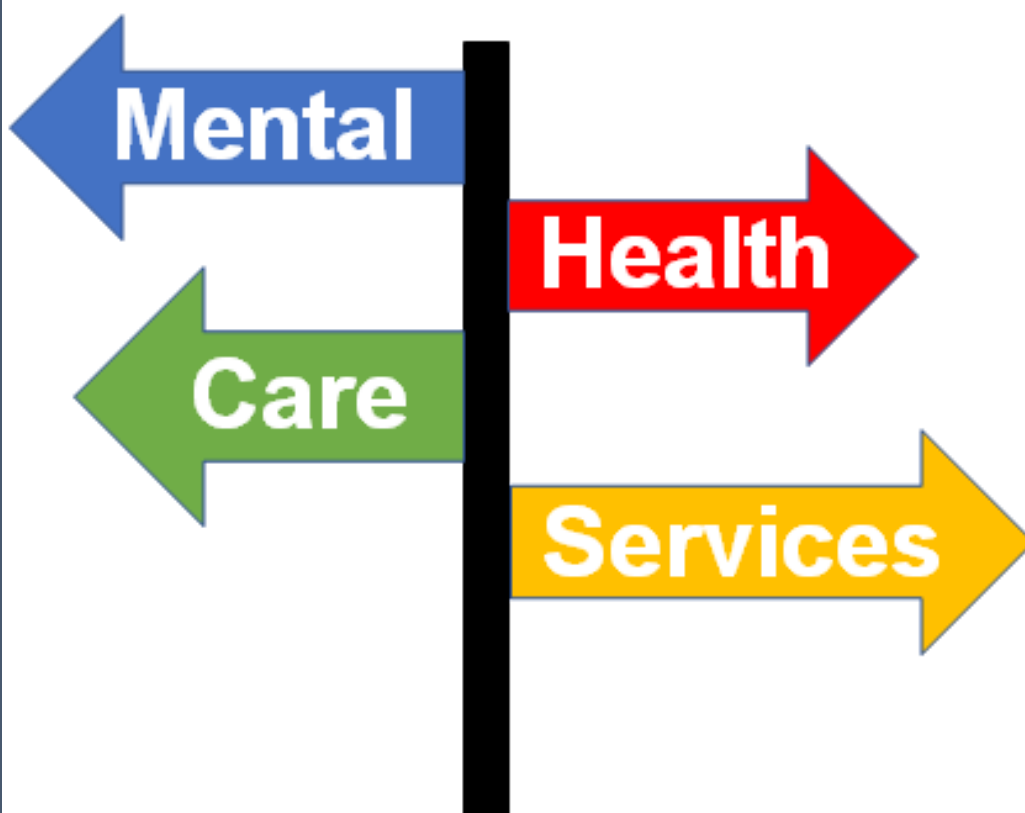
Sleep Therapy 101 (In person at Bathurst site)



Struggling with sleep? Whether falling asleep or staying asleep? Join our in-person Sleep Therapy 101 workshop designed for patients and caregivers who want to learn practical, non-medication strategies to improve sleep.

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Learning About Mental Health Care Services in Ontario (In person at Garrison Creek site)



Are you struggling with your mental health or living with someone who has mental health problems and don't know where to find help? The mental health care system in Ontario is complex and can be challenging to find what you need.

Sign up for this workshop

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www.twfht.ca

Visit our website for clinic updates &
up-to-date health information

[Access Past TW FHT E-Newsletters](#)

Do you have feedback about our newsletter?
Do you have ideas about other health topics?



[Submit your feedback here!](#)