

## Patient Update

January 24th, 2025

Dear patients,

We are writing to share information about:

- Booking appointments online
- Managing cold and flu symptoms
- FHT Winter 2025 Mental Health Group classes and other community programs
- Research Corner: Information about research at the Family Health Team

### Booking Appointments Online

We would like to remind our patients that you can book some appointments with your doctor or nurse practitioner online. If you would like to use this option to book your next appointment, please see our website for [online booking links here](#).

Online appointments cannot be booked for the following appointment types. Please continue to schedule these types of appointments by phoning into the clinic:

- Shared care (back-to-back appointments with the doctor and nurse)- including well baby appointments, some diabetes visits, and preventative health visits
- Same day/next day urgent appointments
- Appointments with nurses or other family health team members

We continue to keep our website updated with information about how to connect with us, and programs and services we offer. [Please look at our website](#) for helpful information about our clinics and teams.

### Health Promotion Updates

As we are still in cold and flu season, we want to provide some information on ways to manage cold symptoms at home, and when to seek medical attention.

Colds are caused by many different viruses and are incredibly common, especially in children. Typical symptoms include stuffy or runny nose, sore throat, sneezing, cough, congestion, low grade fever, reduced appetite, fussiness and less energy than normal. Nasal drainage can range from clear and watery to thick and yellow or green. The flu has similar symptoms to a common

cold, but the symptoms can often be worse, and can in rare cases lead to complications in higher-risk people.

**Symptoms of a common cold usually get better on their own within a few days.** A fever may last 2-4 days. A sore throat may last up to 5 days. Runny nose and congestion may last up to 2 weeks. A cough may last 3 weeks or more. Because colds are caused by viruses, they do not require or get better with antibiotics, they will get better on their own with time.

Here are some ways you can help yourself or your child feel better if you are experiencing a common cold.

- Get lots of fluids and rest.
- Treat any uncomfortable symptoms such as a fever, sore throat, and muscle aches with acetaminophen or ibuprofen (use children's medication for kids, see bottle for dosing).
- It is recommended to check your child's temperature with a thermometer and not rely on physical touch. Physical touch can be misleading and while your child may feel warm, they may not actually have a fever. Tracking temperature with a thermometer also helps you determine how many days your child has a fever and how it is responding to treatment.
- Children 1 year of age or older can be given 1-2 teaspoons of honey to help soothe a cough. Over-the-counter cough medication is NOT recommended in children.
- Use saline nose drops and/or a humidifier to help with decongestion.
- Use a nasal aspirator with saline drops for children who cannot blow their nose to help with decongestion.

### **When to call our clinics or seek emergency care for cold and flu symptoms**

We know being sick and caring for someone who is sick can be stressful and overwhelming. The majority of cases of colds and flu can be managed at home. We encourage you to use the resources below to help you in your self-care and decision-making, including when you should call and book an appointment with us or seek care from the emergency department.

- [SickKids-About Kids Health, Managing URIs](#)
- [Choose Wisely- Navigating colds, flu and kids](#)

Please also see the document below with helpful tips on managing a viral illness from the Ontario College of Family Physicians.

## **FHT Program and Community Program Updates**

### **FHT Mental Health Group Classes**

It's not too late to register for our winter 2025 mental health group classes. Please see below for more information about the classes and how to register. Patients of the Family Health Team can self-register for these classes using the registration link below. Once you self register, a member of our team will connect with you.

**Symphony Storytime**-Supported by the Toronto Public Library and Toronto Symphony Orchestra

We wanted to share some other community programs that you and your family may be interested in. Symphony Storytime is a fun filled day of music and stories. This free program is ideal for school-aged children 4 years of age and up. Families can enjoy a story read by a librarian from the Toronto Public Library, while a musician for the Toronto Symphony Orchestra brings the story to life with live music. They also have Symphony Storytime for neurodiverse children. To learn more and find an upcoming Symphony Storytime, please check out their website [here](#).

**Research Corner**

Please see below for more information about research at our Family Health Team, and different ways you may be invited to get involved.

Take care and be well,

*SMHAFHT Leadership Team*

# Family Doctor Tips on Caring for Children with Respiratory Symptoms

Most respiratory illness in children, including colds, influenza, RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) and COVID-19 can be managed at home without the need for prescription medications. However, in some cases, it is important to seek medical care.

Below, family doctors share tips on how to decide when to seek care for a respiratory illness and how to support your child at home.

## Call your family doctor if your child:

- Has a fever lasting 72 hours or longer.
- Has a fever that went away for a day or longer (without fever medication) and then came back.
- Is unusually irritable and won't stop fussing, even after treating their fever.
- Has an earache lasting more than 48 hours.
- Is not eating or drinking. Note that it's normal to eat and drink less when sick. Liquids are more important than food.
- Has special needs that make caring for them more difficult.



As a parent or guardian, you know your child best. If you feel your child needs to be seen by a family doctor, please reach out for help.



Not sure what to do? Health Connect Ontario has a **symptom checker** and the option to **chat live with a nurse**. You can also **call 811** to speak with a nurse, available 24 hours a day.

## Call 911 or go to the emergency department when:

- You are worried that your child is seriously ill.
- Your infant, younger than three months old, has a fever.
- Your child is struggling to breathe or is breathing faster than normal.
- You are concerned that your child is at risk of dehydration or is dehydrated.

*These are only some examples of when to seek emergency care.* Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) has more information to **help decide if your child needs emergency care**.

For more information specific to COVID-19 and children, including rare complications, see **My Child Has COVID. What Should I Know?** in the **Confused About COVID** series.



## Helping your child at home

- **Fever:** Treat fever or pain with over-the-counter medicines such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen if your child can take it – and if it is available.



Call your family doctor or pharmacist for advice if you are having difficulty accessing over-the-counter medicines. Information from the Canadian Pediatric Society outlines **how to take a child's temperature** and what to do if they have a fever. Here is a video on **managing fever in a child** from the U.K.'s National Health Service.

- **Red eyes and discharge:** These symptoms almost always go away on their own, without antibiotic drops or other medication. Warm compresses and artificial tears can help reduce discomfort.
- **Stuffy and runny nose:** Try saline rinsing sprays, a humidifier or a nasal aspirator.
- **Earache:** If you notice your child tugging on their ear, they may have an earache. Get assessed if your child's earache lasts more than 48-72 hours, if there is discharge from the ear or they have had more than 2-3 ear infections in the last year.
- **Cough:** Treat a cough with a humidifier or the steam from a shower. If the cough sounds like a bark, cool outside air may help. If your child is at least one year old, you can give them 1-2 teaspoons of honey in the evening.
- **Fluids:** Make sure your child gets enough fluids, including water, soups, sports drinks or even popsicles. Breastmilk/formula is enough for young babies who do not drink other fluids.

## Tips to stay healthy and prevent illness

- Wear a mask (and have your child wear a mask) when in crowded, public indoor spaces.
- Wash your hands often and well; use hand sanitizer when washing is not possible.
- Cough and sneeze into your elbow instead of your hands.
- Stay home and keep your child home when they are sick, especially in the first couple of days when most infectious.
- Get the flu shot and keep COVID-19 doses up to date.



Ontario College of  
Family Physicians



The OCFP thanks Dr. Kate Miller and Norfolk Family Medical for the **blog post** which inspired this information.

**St. Michael's - Unity Health Toronto**  
**Family Health Team - Tel: 416.864.3022**



### To participate in groups:

- patients must be age 17+
- patients must be located in Ontario.

### Do you require accommodations?

Inform our facilitators. We are dedicated to providing accessibility for all.

Visit us by clicking on the link below:

[Click Here](#)

Our groups are facilitated by Social Workers, Psychologists, Income Security Health Promoters, and learners. These groups are open to patients within the St. Michael's Academic Family Health team from any of our five clinics.

Our groups may be held in-person or virtually through zoom (must have access to electronic device with microphone and camera). After you register, a team member will contact you to discuss next steps.

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### CLINIC CLOSURES:

Groups will not run on the following dates:

**Monday, February 17, 2025**



# Mental Health Groups

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## [Distress Tolerance \(Anger Management\)](#)

Distress Tolerance (Anger Management) is a 4-week group for anyone who wants to explore the origins and reactions to feelings of anger.

**When:** *Fridays, January 24 - February 14, 2024*

**Time:** *1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.*

**Location:** Online (by Zoom)

**Facilitators:** Bernie Yeung, Social Work Student (MSW)  
and Benjamin Lau, Social Work Student (MSW)

## **Life After Trauma**

7-session CBT-based trauma program for men identified individuals.

**When:** *Wednesdays, January 22 - March 7 (no group Wednesday January 29)*

*Time:* 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m

**Location:** Online (by Zoom)

**Facilitators:** Heather Campbell, MSW, RSW and  
Jeevi Puvirajasingham, MSW, RSW

**Note:** **This group is for men-identified clients with a history of childhood trauma.**

## **Mindfulness Awareness Stabilization Training (MAST)**

MAST is a 5-week group that teaches emotion regulation skills through psychoeducation and mindfulness practice. We are pleased to be able to offer handouts and guided meditations for participants in the program.

**Time:** *1:30 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.*

**When:** *Mondays, February 3 - March 10, 2024 (no group Monday, February 17)*

**Location:** Online (by Zoom)

**Facilitators:** Johanna George, MSW, RSW and Jen Schulze, MSW, RSW

**If you'd like to join any of these groups, please  
click the below or scan QR code to sign up:**

<https://bit.ly/3B8CEnv>



# Income Support Workshops

## Income Support Programs for People with Disabilities

Learn about government pensions you may be able to receive if you are unable to work due to illness or disability. We will cover: the Ontario Disability Support Program, Canada Pension Plan Disability and Employment Insurance Sickness Benefits. Participants will also learn about some free and low-cost services available to individuals with low income.

**When:** *Tuesday, January 28, 2025*

**Time:** 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

**Location:** Online (by Zoom)

**Facilitators:** Deepika Anandkumar and Naomi Berlyne

## Senior's Pensions

Learn about government benefits you may be eligible for once you turn 65, including Canada Pension Plan-Retirement, Old Age Security, and Guaranteed Income Supplement. Participants will also learn about free and low-cost services available to those seniors with low-income.

**When:** *Tuesday, February 25, 2025*

**Time:** 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

**Location:** Online (by Zoom)

**Facilitators:** Deepika Anandkumar and Naomi Berlyne

## Federal Income Support Programs and Benefits

Learn about different income support programs and benefits offered by the Federal Government. These include Employment Insurance, Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security, Canadian Dental Care Plan, Trillium Drug Benefit, the Canada Child Benefit, and the Child Disability Benefit.

**When:** *Tuesday, March 11, 2025*

**Time:** 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

**Location:** Online (by Zoom)

**Facilitators:** Deepika Anandkumar and Naomi Berlyne

If you'd like to join any of these workshops,  
please click the link below to sign up:

<https://bit.ly/3VmkiGn>





# Health Justice Program

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This program, offered by Neighborhood Legal Services (NLS), provides Legal System Navigation, Legal Information, and Brief Legal Services to low-income patients of the St. Michael's Hospital Family Health Team (FHT). To qualify for support, participants must meet the financial eligibility requirements for legal aid. The program also offers a **monthly drop-in service** at several clinics.

## The schedule is as follows:

**First Friday** of each month from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. - 61 Queen Street East, 3rd Floor

**Second Friday** of each month 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. - The Health Centre at 80 Bond St.

**Third Friday** of each month from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. - Wellesley-St Jamestown Health Centre, 95 Homewood Ave

**Fourth Friday** of each month from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. - Sumac Creek Health Centre, 73 Regent Park Blvd, 3rd Floor





# Research Corner: Welcome to Research at the Family Health Team

## WHY WE DO RESEARCH

Our Family Health Team works closely with St. Michael's Hospital in many areas. One of these areas include health research.



Health research is important as it contributes to increased information and knowledge that can help to improve care and care experiences for everyone. Research is a part of our 2020-2025 Strategic plan.

## HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED

As a patient of our Family Health Team, and St. Michael's Hospital, there may be times where there are opportunities for you to get involved in health research. This can include:



### Questionnaires



### Interviews



### Clinical Trials

This will always **be optional**, and have no impact on the care you receive from our team. We intend for this new section of our newsletter to keep you informed about any research projects or opportunities patients may be interested to learn more about.

Please **stay tuned to** the Research Corner of future Patient Updates for more information on research and how to get involved!