



Local Health Info Survey Results

Information about the health behaviours, knowledge and attitudes of our residents is an important tool that helps the Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit identify emerging issues, plan programs and improve its services.

Since January 2001, the HKPR District Health Unit, together with 21 other health units in Ontario, has been participating in the **Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System (RRFSS)**.

The surveillance system features a monthly telephone survey of 100 adults 18 years of age and older who live in Haliburton and Northumberland counties and the City of Kawartha Lakes. The survey includes questions on the lifestyle behaviours and attitudes that may impact upon the person's health and the health of others around them.

The survey is conducted by the Institute for Social Research of York University on behalf of the HKPR District Health Unit.

The following is a sample of some of the health attitudes of 1,200 local residents expressed in 2001.

Sun Safety

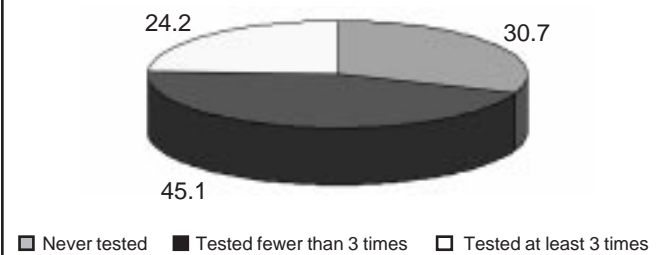
Exposure to the sun's ultraviolet rays can cause people to develop skin cancer, a disease that can be fatal if left untreated. Yet, 33 per cent of adults report having had a sunburn in the past year. Gender and education do not seem to make any difference in reported sunburns. However, those residents aged 18-24 years get significantly more sunburns as compared to those aged 35-65 years. Residents aged 65 years and older get significantly fewer sunburns than younger adults aged 18-54 years of age.

Safe Water

Ground water is usually clean and safe for consumption. However, contamination can occur as a result of poor well construction or as a result of contaminated surface run-off water entering the well. Drinking water that is contaminated may contain harmful bacteria, viruses and parasites that can make people sick. To prevent illness, wells should be tested regularly.

The survey found that 52 per cent of people living in the area served by the HKPR District Health Unit get their drinking water from a private well and approximately half of the wells are not deep drilled.

How often HKPR residents with private wells test their drinking water, RRFSS 2001



As well, 31 per cent of those with a private well have not tested their well in the past 12 months and 45 per cent of those with wells have inadequately tested it. Water testing bottles are available from any of the Health Unit's offices. Once the filled bottle is returned to the Health Unit, it is sent to the provincial lab for testing. While results are sent directly to residents, the Health Unit's public health inspectors are available to help residents understand results and advise on possible remedies for adverse water reports.

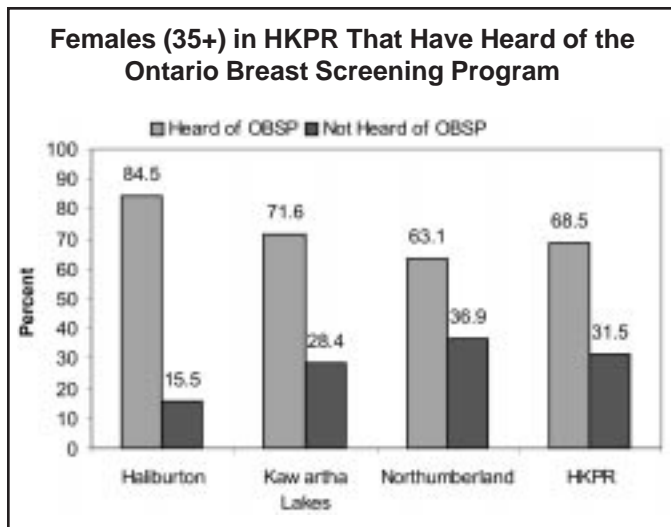
Falls

Falls are the leading cause of injury for Canadians 65 years of age and older, yet most are preventable. Of residents aged 65 years and older, 22 per cent reported having a fall in the past year. Eight per cent (almost 2,600 seniors) reported the fall was serious enough to limit their daily activities.

Women's Early Detection of Cancer

Women should have a regular pap smear as a means of early detection of cervical cancer. While 95 per cent of local women (18 years and older) have had a pap smear in their lifetime, many do not continue to get routine pap smears throughout life. Almost 20 per cent of women at risk for cervical cancer have not had a pap smear in the last two years.

Women aged 50-74 years should have a mammogram every two years as a method of early detection of breast cancer. But 21 per cent, or 5,262 women in the HKPR District Health Unit's area have not had a mammogram within the past two years.

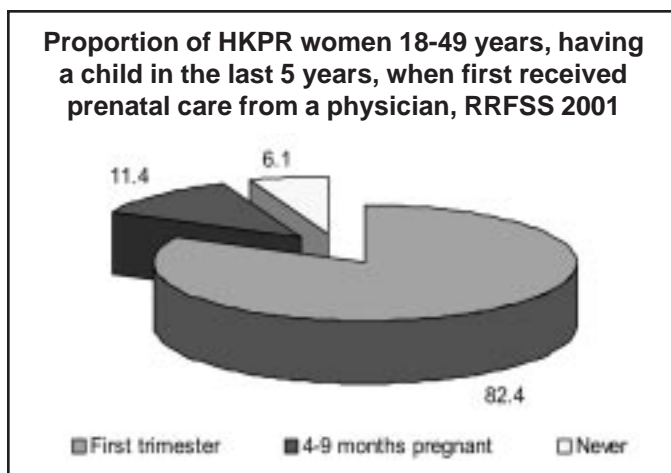


RRFSS findings show that 75 per cent of women in the HKPR area aged 50-74 years have heard of the Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP). As well, almost 70 per cent of female residents of HKPR aged 35 years and older have heard of the Ontario Breast Screening Program. Haliburton has a significantly greater proportion of respondents aware of the OBSP than Northumberland County. There are no observed differences between any other of the counties.

Reproductive Health

Planned pregnancy

Folic acid is an important nutrient for women in their reproductive years, since it can prevent neural tube birth defects that occur before most women know they are pregnant.



The survey found that:

- Of women in the HKPR District Health Unit's area that have had a child in the past five years, almost half (49 per cent) reported they had visited a physician as a part of planning their pregnancy.
- 43 per cent indicated they had taken folic acid before becoming pregnant and 83 per cent received pre-natal care from a physician in the first trimester of their pregnancy.

Alcohol during pregnancy can cause birth defects by affecting the growth and formation of the baby's body and brain. Of those surveyed, 75 per cent thought there was no safe level of alcohol for a woman to drink during pregnancy, leaving 25 per cent that thought some varying level of alcohol was acceptable.

Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding provides an important start in life for new babies. Breast milk is safe, fresh and helps prevent babies from getting allergies or ear, chest and stomach infections. It also helps protect mothers against breast and ovarian cancer.

In our community, more than 25 per cent of adults do not think breastfeeding is acceptable in a shopping mall or in a restaurant and an additional 10 per cent say "it depends."

Tobacco Use

Smoking is the most significant cause of preventable illness, disability and premature death in Canada.

Tobacco related diseases kill 33 people a day in Ontario. Each year, they kill 12,000 Ontario residents and 40,000 Canadians. Cigarette smoke is the leading cause of lung cancer for both men and women.

According to RRFSS:

- 25 per cent of adults living in the HKPR area smoke - 20 per cent of that group smoke daily.
- 32 per cent of households in our community, still have someone who smokes regularly inside the home.
- More than 50 per cent of households are reported to be smoke-free - the remaining 50 per cent have either limited restriction or no restrictions to smoking in their homes.

Among Northumberland County residents, 81 per cent do not think people should be involuntarily exposed to tobacco smoke in restaurants and 43 per cent report that

smoking should not be allowed at all in restaurants. As well, 82 per cent do not think people should be involuntarily exposed to tobacco smoke in the workplace and 44 per cent report that smoking should not be allowed at all in the workplace.

Three out of four residents of Haliburton County (77 per cent) do not think people should be involuntarily exposed to tobacco smoke in restaurants and 40 per cent report that smoking should not be allowed at all in restaurants. Another 76 per cent do not think people should be involuntarily exposed to tobacco smoke in the workplace and 42 per cent report that smoking should not be allowed at all in the workplace.

Three out of four residents of the City of Kawartha Lakes (77 per cent) do not think people should be involuntarily exposed to tobacco smoke in restaurants and 36 per cent report that smoking should not be allowed at all in restaurants. The survey found that 78 per cent of respondents do not think people should be involuntarily exposed to tobacco smoke in the workplace and 41 per cent report that smoking should not be allowed at all in the workplace.

Diet

Healthy eating, including a diet high in fruits and vegetables, can reduce our risk of heart disease and cancer. Despite that, almost 60 per cent of survey respondents report they do not eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables daily, as recommended by Canada's Food Guide. To help residents learn more about choosing healthy foods, the HKPR District Health Unit offers supermarket tours in area grocery stores. Residents can contact their local Health Unit office for times and locations.

Eating Out

The RRFSS survey found that:

- not counting fast food or drive-through outlets, 46.4 per cent of our residents eat out at a restaurant one to two times a week and almost 11 per cent eat in restaurants more than three times a week.
- 34 per cent of our residents order take out food including fast food and drive-through outlets one to two times weekly. More than eight per cent eat take out food more than three times a week.
- 26 per cent of residents purchase ready-to eat foods from the grocery store one to two times per week.

When asked about the importance of getting nutritious food when eating out at restaurants or ordering fast food,

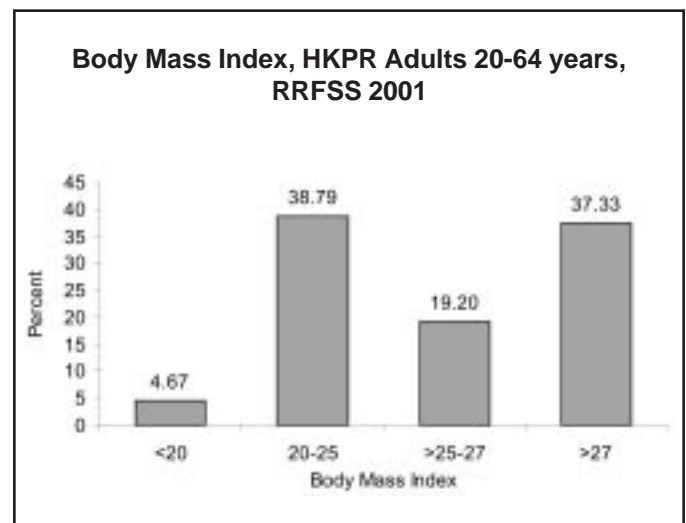
58.6 per cent of local residents responded it was very important to them. Another 33.9 per cent thought it was somewhat important and seven per cent responded it was not important at all to them.

Families that enjoy eating out can now choose local restaurants that include healthy food choices on their menus. The HKPR District Health Unit, through the provincial Eat Smart! restaurant program, recognizes area restaurants that provide diners with choices, smoke-free seating and the assurance of safe food handling practices. Contact the closest Health Unit office for a copy of the Eat Smart! Dining Guide.

Weight

Body weight is predicted by a number of factors including genetics, height, build, calorie intake and level of physical activity. Body Mass Index (BMI) is the ratio of a person's height to their weight and is used as an indicator of healthy weight for adults aged 20-64 years, excluding pregnant women.

BMI of less than 20 is considered underweight. An acceptable weight is a BMI 20-25. A BMI greater than 25 but less than 27 indicates the possibility of being overweight. A BMI greater than 27 is considered overweight.



The survey found:

- 39 per cent of residents have a healthy acceptable weight and an almost equivalent proportion (37 per cent) are considered overweight.
- almost half of adult men (47 per cent) living in our communities are overweight, as are 30 per cent of adult women.

Cancer Risks

When residents were asked to name some of the main causes of cancer:

- more than 40 per cent did not name smoking as a leading cause.
- 96 per cent did not name lack of physical activity.
- 78 per cent of adults did not name poor nutrition as one of the main causes of cancer.
- 83 per cent left out sun exposure.

Heart Disease

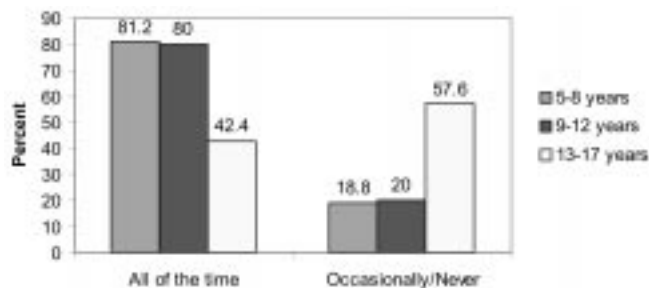
Heart disease is the leading cause of all deaths in the HKPR area. Tobacco use, poor nutrition and lack of adequate physical activity are the main risk factors for heart disease. Yet of persons asked to name some of the main causes of heart disease:

- 54 per cent did not mention smoking as a main cause of heart disease.
- 66 per cent did not mention lack of exercise.
- 43 per cent did not mention poor nutrition.

Helmet Use

Children are at a higher risk for injury as they are less skilled cyclists. The human skull is just one centimetre thick, about the same thickness as a ballpoint pen. It can be fractured or broken by an impact of seven to 10 kilometres an hour. Children on wheels usually reach

How often children wear a bike helmet by age of child for HKPR, RRFSS 2001



these speeds and greater. More than 500 Canadian children are hospitalized every year for head injuries from bike crashes alone. Approximately 30 children die each year from these injuries.

Based on RRFSS findings, 64 per cent of children aged five to 17 years always use a bicycle safety helmet. However of children aged 5-12, 80 per cent always use a bicycle safety helmet, indicating a decline in the safety practices of teens, aged 13 to 17 years.

Seat Belt Use

There is no doubt that seat belts save lives. Consider the fact that one-third of drivers and passengers in fatal collisions in Ontario were not wearing their seat belts when they died. While police services across Ontario still laid 20,646 charges for seat belt violations during seat belt challenges in spring 2001, the RRFSS survey found that 90 per cent of residents in the HKPR area report wearing their seat belt while driving or riding in an automobile.



For more information on the results of Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System contact Ann Marie Holt at (905) 885-9100, ext. 215 or toll-free at 1-866-888-HKPR (4577). She can also be reached through e-mail at aholt@hkpr.on.ca.

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