

# Healthy living in Manitoba

Compiled by AMM Staff

It has been said, “Healthy people make healthy families and healthy families make healthy communities.” There are many factors affecting the health of Manitobans. These include family history, gender, culture, education, employment, income, the environment, our coping skills and social support networks. As individuals and groups, there are many things that we can do to positively influence our physical, mental, social and spiritual health and wellbeing.

According to Manitoba’s Healthy Living Minister, **Kerri-Irvin Ross**, “All Manitobans have a role to play in building healthy communities. This includes a daily commitment to a healthier, more active lifestyle. It is a collective commitment – one we must pursue together for the well-being of all Manitobans.”

While a wide range of healthy living initiatives are available, what follows is just a partial list of those that may be of particular interest to municipal officials.

## Manitoba in motion

*In motion* is a provincial strategy to help all Manitobans make physical activity part of their daily lives for health and enjoyment. The province’s vision is to make Manitobans healthier by increasing physical activity in the province by 10% by the year 2010.

Communities can get involved by registering to become a *Community in motion*. *Communities in motion* encourage all parts of the community such as local governments, health services, recreation services, schools, workplaces and neighborhoods to do their parts to increase physical activity opportunities for everyone. If you are interested in becoming a *Community in motion*, resources and tools, call 204-945 3648 in Winnipeg; or toll free at 1-866-788-3648.

Manitoba *in motion* Physical Activity Grants are available to help community partners plan and implement ways to increase regular physical activity among citizens of all ages. The next deadline for applications is October 15, 2007 for projects starting after January 1, 2008. For more information or to download a grant application, visit <http://www.manitobainmotion.ca/communities/>.

## Mandatory PE in high school

Health Minister **Peter Bjornson** announced in April that physical education/health education (PE/HE) will become part of the Manitoba curriculum for the fall of 2008. The grades 11 and 12 PE/HE curricula will focus on developing active, healthy lifestyles through in-class and out-of-class activities. Students will be encouraged to take greater ownership of their own physical fitness and find activities suited to their interests and abilities.

## Moving around Manitoba

Moving Around Manitoba, a new program encouraging Manitobans to get in motion, make healthy eating choices, manage their stress and support emotional wellbeing was launched in April 2007. A special website was set up to allow users to make a virtual trip around Manitoba as they track their physical activity levels. Registrants receive registration kits including information to help track personal physical activity, healthy eating and other items. The first 1,000 people to register also received a free pedometer.

As of June 13, 2007, more than 2,100 Manitobans had registered for Moving

Around Manitoba according to Healthy Living Minister Kerri Irvin-Ross.

“Since the launch of Moving Around Manitoba in early April, more than 2,125 participants have signed up and covered over 50,000 kilometres, taking us around Manitoba more than 12 times. To put it in a different context, it is like traveling from Winnipeg to Sydney, Australia, and back twice,” said Irvin-Ross.

Manitobans can register for the program online at <http://www.movingaroundmanitoba.ca> or by calling 945-3648 in Winnipeg or 1-866-788-3648 (toll-free).

## Services for seniors

Seniors are recognized as one of the fastest-growing age groups in Canada. Manitoba currently has one of the highest per capita populations of seniors in the country with more than 157,000 residents being age 65 or older (14%). In 2001, 22% of Manitobans were aged 55 and older and this is expected to increase to 33% by 2021.

The Seniors and Healthy Aging Secretariat acts as a central point of contact for seniors, their family members and organizations. Staff members also



work to ensure government policies, programs and legislation reflect the needs of seniors.

Information on seniors housing, elder abuse, driving, legal tips, resources for caregivers, and more is available at <http://www.gov.mb.ca/shas/>.

### Chronic disease prevention

According to the Manitoba Healthy Living website, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and cancer cost the Canadian economy more than an estimated \$55 billion every year. This represents the major and growing component of health care costs.

The most common chronic diseases include:

- cardiovascular disease;
- diabetes;
- cancer;
- chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD);
- asthma; and
- mental illness (including depression, stress and anxiety).

For information on activities that could help prevent or delay the onset of chronic disease, visit <http://www.gov.mb.ca/healthyliving/chronic.html>.

### Healthy eating

Eating healthy foods in the right amounts can improve our overall health and help us avoid unhealthy weights. This can lower our risk for conditions like diabetes and heart disease.

Manitoba Health offers a comprehensive list of nutrition and healthy eating information at <http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/nutrition/index.html>. Topics covered include Nutrition Services & Programs, Healthy Eating, Food Security, and Food Supply.

In addition, Manitoba Healthy Living has established the Healthy Food in Schools website at <http://www.gov.mb.ca/healthy-schools/foodinschools/index.html>.

### Injury prevention

Tragically, between 1992 and 2001, 5,702 Manitobans died as a result of injuries. As well, there were 120,611 hospitalizations for injuries in the province. However, deaths and hospitalizations due to injuries are preventable.

Manitoba Healthy Living has produced a report titled *Injuries in Manitoba: A 10-Year Review*, examining injuries in Manitoba during this time period. The report is designed to show the details of the burden of injury in our province to assist policy

makers and service providers with planning for injury prevention.

The report can be downloaded at <http://www.gov.mb.ca/healthyliving/injuryreview.html>. Information on water safety and farm safety are also available.

### Canadian Safe Communities Foundation

Could Canada become the safest country in the world for people to live, learn, work, and play? The Canadian Safe Communities Foundation (SCF) thinks so. This not-for-profit group is dedicated to making Canada a safe place to live, one community at a time. There are currently 46 Safe Communities covering an estimated 21% of Canadians. Brandon and the surrounding area is the first and, so far, the only designated Safe Community in Manitoba.

The AMM profiled the Canadian Safe Communities Foundation and it's only Manitoba member, Brandon, in the Winter 2005 issue of the *Municipal Leader*.

To learn how your community can become designated a "Safe Community" visit <http://www.safecommunities.ca/>.


### Tobacco reduction

This year, tobacco will kill about 2,000 Manitobans.

In 1999 federal, provincial and territorial governments developed a national strategy to reduce tobacco use and agreed upon four goals including:


- Preventing youth from starting to smoke;
- Protecting non-smokers from exposure to second-hand smoke;
- Helping smokers quit; and
- Denormalizing tobacco use through influencing social norms.

Manitoba has taken a coordinated, comprehensive approach to reduce smoking-related disease, disability and death in Manitoba. On March 2, 2004, the Minister of Healthy Living introduced Bill 21 in the Legislature. This bill, prohibiting smoking in enclosed public and indoor workplaces where the government has clear jurisdiction, took effect on October 1, 2004.



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Healthy Living Manitoba has also developed the **Manitoba Provincial Tobacco Control Strategy: A Co-coordinated, Comprehensive Approach to Reduce Smoking-Related Disease, Disability and Death in Manitoba**. This document can be viewed at <http://www.gov.mb.ca/healthyliving/docs/tobacco2463.pdf>.

### Protect your noggin

One of the recommendations from the Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures Task Force report of 2004 was to educate the public on the importance of wearing bike helmets. In 2006, the province introduced a low-cost bike helmet initiative that resulted in the purchase of more than 18,000 helmets and in March 2007, announced the program would be extended for another year. "Protect your Noggin" program information is available online at <http://www.gov.mb.ca/healthyliving/bikehelmet.html>

It is estimated that a properly fitted certified bike helmet can reduce the risk of serious head injury by up to 85 per cent. The American Academy of Pediatrics states that, "Having children wear helmets is the single most effective thing parents and caregivers can do to make bicycle riding safer."



### West Nile virus

West Nile virus (WNV) is transmitted by mosquitoes. Most people who are bitten by an infected mosquito do not become ill and for those who do, the symptoms are usually mild. In some cases, the virus causes serious illness and sometimes death. Human cases of WNV were first detected in (southern) Manitoba in the summer of 2003, when 143 cases were identified. Of these 143 cases, 35 people had severe illness, including two deaths. In 2004, three human cases of WNV were identified, one with severe illness. In 2005, 58 human WNV cases were identified of which 10 cases were of the severe form of WNV, including one death. In 2006, 51 human cases were identified, including 17 severe cases.

Most mosquitoes do not carry WNV. In Manitoba, the main carrier of the virus is the *Culex tarsalis* mosquito. The risk of WNV varies from year to year and is influenced by temperature, precipitation, amount of virus in birds, etc. Manitobans are at highest risk of being bitten by a WNV infected mosquito during the months of July, August and early September, although some late June exposures have occurred.

The province's 2007 West Nile virus strategy includes surveillance, risk assessment, public education and mosquito control. Some refinements to the 2007 program have been made based on experience from previous years, feedback received, emerging information and national guidelines. The success of a program aimed at protecting citizens from new and emerging disease requires strong partnerships between the municipal, provincial and federal governments, as well as the public. Municipalities play key roles in supporting the planning and implementation of these activities.

For the latest information on West Nile virus, visit <http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/wnv/index.html>.

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