

Let's Start A Conversation About Health

And Not Talk About Health Care At All

Health starts where we live, learn, work and play!

Where people live, learn, work and play has an enormous impact on our health and well being. Health starts with affordable housing in safe neighbourhoods. Health starts with access to healthy food to nurture physical and mental development. Health starts with quality education in safe schools. Health starts with good jobs in stable workplaces. Health starts with the time and the means to play and enjoy life.

We are from Grey Bruce, we are known for innovation and resourcefulness. We are known for coming up with creative solutions to complex problems. So, let's start a conversation about health.



Grey Bruce Profile

Population:¹

- Total population of 158,670 located throughout 17 municipalities.
- Two First Nations and several Mennonite and Amish communities.
- 21% of the population is over the age of 65 years.
- 15% of the population is under the age of 15 years.



Allenford Community Working Together

Did You Know?³

- 58% of residents are overweight or obese.
- 21% of residents have hypertension.
- 57% of residents do not eat enough fruits and vegetables.
- 18% of residents smoke.
- 47% of residents are physically inactive.
- 33% of residents report limited participation in certain activities because of mental or physical health issues.
- 19% of residents over the age of 12 are regular heavy drinkers.
- 18% of residents suffered injuries in the past 12 months causing limitations of normal activities.
- Grey Bruce has double the rate of injury related Emergency Room visits compared to Ontario.²

Do we really know the causes? There are many forces that impact health.

Housing

Safe, affordable and stable housing influences health. For example, the presence of lead or mold, poor heating, dampness and overcrowding can result in a range of health problems. High housing costs leaves less money for food and other necessities.⁶

- Bruce County has developed a plan to create 445 affordable housing units in the next ten years (2013-2023). Grey County has developed a plan for transitioning people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to permanent housing.^{7,8}

Transportation

A comprehensive public transportation system can reduce isolation and link residents to programs, services and other communities.

- Only Owen Sound has a public transit. There is no public transit connecting municipalities across Grey Bruce.
- Most residents require a vehicle to complete tasks of daily living.

Unemployment/Job Security

Lower income from under unemployment or no employment challenges the ability to provide basic necessities. People without a job tend to experience more health problems including adult onset diabetes, heart attacks and mental health issues such as depression, anxiety and increased suicide rates.

- The unemployment rate for youth aged 15 – 24 is 14%.¹
- Lowest incomes in Grey Bruce are found in rural areas and in downtown Owen Sound.¹⁰
- 11% of children aged 17 and under in Grey Bruce live in low income families.¹

Access to Healthy Foods

Food is a basic human need. Households without enough healthy foods are more likely to report obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure.⁶

- In 2013, it costs \$179.07 per week (\$775.37 per month) to feed a family of four (2 adults and 2 children).⁴
- In rural Ontario, 42% of people accessing food banks are women, 17% are First Nations.¹²

Education

People with higher education tend to be healthier overall. Higher education helps people move up the socio-economic ladder and access better paying jobs.⁶

- 1 in 5 adults in Grey Bruce over the age of 25 did not complete high school.¹

Early Childhood Development

Early childhood is the most important phase for overall development throughout the lifespan. Premature babies or babies born with low birth weight (less than 2,500 grams) are at risk for poor health and development.¹³ High birth weight babies (greater than 4,000 grams) are also at increased risk for many health concerns including obesity.⁹

- In Grey Bruce, the rate of high birth weight babies was 14% compared to 11% across Ontario from 1986-2006.⁹

Social Network

A sense of belonging in a community promotes involvement and enhances self-worth.

- 3 in 4 Grey Bruce residents feel a sense of belonging to the community.³

Taking Action Together

We can work together towards...

- affordable housing
- cultural diversity
- walkable communities
- healthy local food
- living wages
- educational opportunities
- community engagement
- public transportation
- early childhood development
- better quality homes
- job skills training
- high quality childcare

...and many other aspects that will support a healthy community.



Shifting the Focus to Build Healthier Communities

Reducing Poverty

- The Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force facilitates community partnerships to advocate for poverty reduction by addressing access to food, housing, transportation and income security issues.⁵

Ensuring Clean Air

- Smoke-Free Outdoor Spaces initiatives in Grey and Bruce Counties and at the municipal level support healthy communities.

Keeping Communities Safe through Partnerships

- Partnership with Bruce Power provides car seats and bicycle helmets to under resourced families.
- Falls prevention programs are undertaken with community partners through funding from South West Local Health Integration Network (LHIN).

Understanding our Community

- Geographical Information System (GIS) Mapping was completed in collaboration with Western University. This project focused on healthy eating and physical activity opportunities in Grey Bruce but also identified the proportion of low income families, lone parent families and individuals living in homes that are in need of major repair.¹⁰

Improving Access to Education

- Safe Food Handling and Smart Serve Certification courses support employment opportunities. Programs for job retraining, literacy and skills upgrading are also available.

Encouraging Active Transportation

- A “Solutions for Active Transportation” workshop offered roads professionals ways to advance active transport in both rural and urban areas.

Supporting a Culture of Moderation

- Grey Bruce municipalities are working together to develop a joint municipal alcohol policy template.

Improving Access to Healthy Food Choices

- Community gardens are springing up in many rural areas bringing volunteers, businesses and town staff together to grow healthy local vegetables.
- The Good Food Box Program, available in 18 locations throughout Grey and Bruce, offers fresh produce at affordable rates.
- Grey Bruce Eat & Learn Student Nutrition Program is available in every Grey Bruce school.

We are talking about our schools, our jobs, our friends and family, our employers, our government; the place we call home – OUR community. The evidence is all around us – we are working together to build healthier communities.

Let's Get Moving

We can improve our community's health because we are...¹¹

All of Us

- Become involved in your community.
- Start small. Find ways to make your neighbourhood more friendly and inclusive.
- Get to know your neighbours. Recognize and support those who might be going through a difficult time.
- Vote and be responsive to local issues.
- Write a letter to your local or provincial government to request changes to policies.

Educators

- Provide opportunities for parents to become involved in their child's education.
- Support programs that address the social and economic needs of students and families such as school meals and subsidized school events.
- Encourage student involvement in policy change such as minimum wage increases or student employment opportunities.

Employers

- Provide a living wage.
- Provide flexible work hours and job security.
- Provide on the job learning and training opportunities.
- Incorporate wellness and safety initiatives in the workplace.

Community Partners

- Volunteer
- Identify and address service gaps and barriers that reduce opportunities for health for some members of our communities.
- Seek opportunities to partner and collaborate with other agencies.
- Build support for changes to policies that impact the health of our communities.

Municipal Councillors

- Encourage green spaces in your community.
- Provide healthy affordable food options such as vegetables and fruits in recreational centres and vending machines.
- Provide accessible public transportation.
- Strengthen policies to prevent alcohol misuse and create a culture of moderation.
- Make outdoor spaces, such as playgrounds, tobacco free.

Moving forward...

Your support is essential to achieve community health. So, let's start a conversation... and let's get moving!

For more information:

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This document supports the video, Let's Start A Conversation About Health:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wsi_VqO1DsM

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