

CHILDREN'S CHARTER REPORT 2008

Children's Environmental Health

EARTH:



because everybody needs a home

Children's Environmental Health

There are many types of contaminants found indoors and outdoors that can affect a child's health. While governments can play a large role in creating a healthier environment for children, day to day changes that we make on our own and as a community can also create a safe and healthy place for children to live.

Why Are Children More at Risk?

- **Children eat, drink and breathe more than adults**
Children also have a faster metabolism. They are exposed to more contaminants found in the air, soil, dust, water, food and consumer products.
- **Children do things differently than adults**
Small children explore the world by crawling and are closer to the ground where more contaminants are found. Children tend to put dirty hands and objects in their mouths.
- **Children go through many growth and development stages**
There are many different stages of growth from conception, birth, childhood to 18 years of age. Exposure to contaminants at various stages can affect how a child develops.
- **Risk is greatest in the womb**
Different organs and systems develop during the nine months of pregnancy. Many contaminants easily cross the placenta and reach the fetus. Even low levels of exposure to certain chemicals can affect the health of a developing fetus.
- **Children have a longer lifetime ahead of them**
Exposure to some contaminants can cause permanent damage right away. Other contaminants can build up and be stored in body fat, bone or brain tissue where health problems may not become obvious for a long time, or until adulthood.

What Types of Contaminants Are Found in the Environment?



There are many types of contaminants found in the indoor and outdoor environment. Children can come into contact with them in one or more of the following ways:

- Air
- Consumer Products
- Dust
- Food
- Soil
- Water

Artwork by Jakob



The table below lists some environmental contaminants, where they are found, and how they come in contact with the human body.

Contaminant	Air	Consumer Products	Dust	Food	Soil	Water	Examples of where it is found
Lead	X	X	X		X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - leaded paint/lead dust still in older homes - imported jewelry, toys - lead soldered water pipes - leaded gas, banned in some countries
Mercury		X		X	X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - large predator fish (swordfish, shark, blue fin, tuna) - fluorescent light bulbs - thermometers - car switches
Outdoor Pollution	X						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - car/diesel exhaust - fuel combustion - burning of garbage or materials containing harmful chemicals - industrial air releases
Poly Chlorinated Biphenyls (PCB's)	X			X	X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - transformer cooling oil (now banned) - stored in fat of some fish
Second Hand Smoke	X						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - tobacco industry products (cigarettes) - the smoke that is exhaled by smokers
Ultraviolet (UV) Radiation	X						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the sun's rays (even on cloudy days) - artificial tanning beds - some industries (nuclear)
Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC's)	X	X					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - burning fossil fuels - fumes from solvents like paints and paint thinners - fumes from new carpets, cigarette smoke, hair spray, nail polish and new cars
Pesticides	X			X	X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - fruits/vegetables - pesticides travel from farm fields, golf courses and parks to other destinations - used for pest control in houses and apartments, as well as indoor plants and gardens, lawns and pets
Polycarbonate (Bisphenol A)  PC		X					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - hard or rigid plastics - baby bottles, lining of food and pop cans - CD's, DVD's, electronics
Poly Vinyl Chloride (PVC)  V	X	X					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - vinyl off-gasses from childrens toys (soft, floating type), shower curtains, plastic tablecloths - also known as "toxic plastic"
Phthalates	X	X					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - childrens soft toys, medical equipment, flooring and packaging, plastic food wrap, paints, lubricants, car interiors - shampoos, cosmetics, often listed under fragrances in ingredient list
Polybrominated Diphenyl Ethers (PBDE)	X	X	X		X	X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - used as flame retardants and heat stabilizers in many plastics including computers, appliances, furniture, furniture covers, foam, car interiors - also known as the "new PCB"



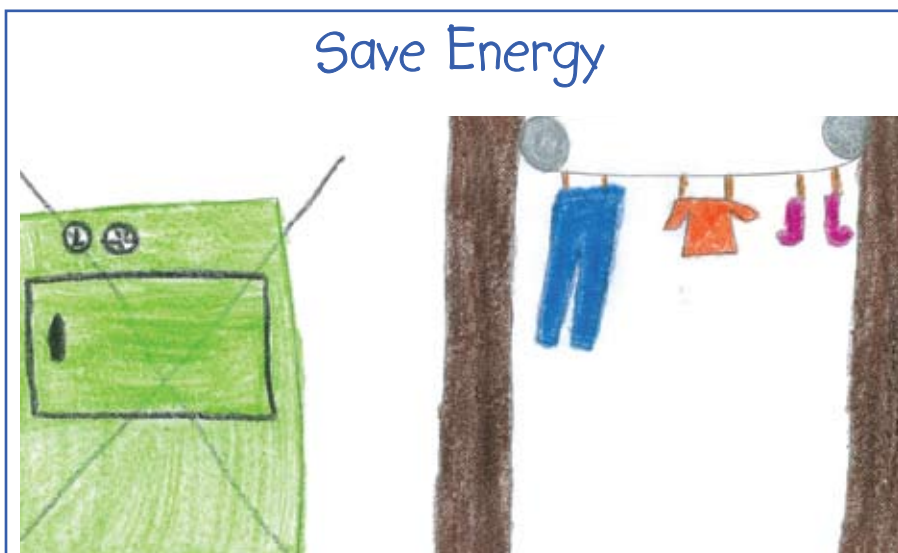
How Can I Help Reduce the Risks?

There are many things that we can do to create a healthy environment for ourselves and our children. As mentioned, pregnant women and children should be extra cautious.

In the Home

Air/Consumer Products/Dust

- Use low or no Volatile Organic Compound (VOC) paint instead of oil-based paints for indoor painting as they contain less harmful solvents.
- Open windows when cleaning, vacuuming, making crafts, working with solvents and when showering.
- Remove unnecessary carpets from your home and use a vacuum with a HEPA filter.
- Limit the vinyl products you purchase such as tablecloths and shower curtains. If you purchase them, let them air outside for a few days while they “off gas” (release chemicals).
- Don't buy vinyl toys.
- Reduce the use of personal care products such as hair spray, nail polish, shampoos and perfumes.
- Maintain a smoke-free home.
- Choose environmentally friendly cleaners or make your own.
- Dust regularly with a damp cloth to prevent dust build up especially around electronic equipment.
- Don't use room deodorizers and air fresheners in your home.
- Purchase unscented phosphate-free laundry detergent.
- Buy clothes that don't need dry cleaning.
- Remove dryer lint after every load and throw out right away.
- Remove outdoor shoes at the door to avoid tracking dirt indoors.
- Take a shower as soon as you arrive home if you work with harmful chemicals such as pesticides. Wash these work clothes separately.
- Be aware of imported jewelry or toys made with lead. If you are able to draw a gray line on paper with the item, it may contain lead.



Artwork by Anyssa Hoover



Food

- Use glass and stainless steel products in the kitchen more often than plastic or Teflon.
- Use glass to reheat microwavable food.
- Cool food before putting into plastic containers.
- If possible, choose organic when buying meat, dairy and the following fruits and vegetables: apples, celery, cherries, grapes, lettuce, nectarines, peaches, pears, potatoes, spinach, strawberries and sweet bell peppers.
- Follow fish consumption guidelines for women of childbearing-age and children under 15. Get your copy of Fish Facts for Families at www.tbdhu.com and search “Home Environment”. Download “The Guide to Eating Ontario Sport Fish” at www.ontario.ca/fishguide.
- Prepare more homemade food rather than buying prepared, store-bought ready food.
- Get to know your plastics! Some are safer than others. Visit www.tbdhu.com and search “home environment”.
- Check where your food comes from and buy foods produced closer to home.
- Plant a garden. Compost your vegetable waste.
- Avoid burnt food, especially from the barbecue.

In the Yard and Garage

Air/Consumer Products/Soil

- Store chemicals and paints in a shed or a detached garage.
- Don't idle your car inside the garage.
- Bike, walk, car pool or take the bus more often.
- Don't use car deodorizers.
- Don't smoke in your car, especially if children under 16 are in the car (Bill 69).
- Clean the car with environmentally friendly products.
- Avoid the use of pesticides on the lawn or in the garden.
- Stay indoors on very hot or smoggy days.



Artwork by
Mariah Morrison



What is Happening in Thunder Bay?

An old African proverb states that “it takes a village to raise a child”. We are fortunate to have many organizations and initiatives working towards making our community an environmentally safe and comfortable place for children to live.

EarthWise Thunder Bay

This is a partnership between the City of Thunder Bay and the community to create an environmental plan.



What You Can Do!

- Visit the website www.earthwisethunderbay.com and send in ideas, comments or concerns via the feedback form.
- Get involved in helping to implement the plan. Copies are available at any public library on the website or by contacting the city directly.

Fluorescent Bulb Return Program

Fluorescent bulbs, both tubes and compact fluorescent, contain small amounts of mercury which is only hazardous if the bulb is broken.

EcoSuperior (212 Miles St. E.) recycles all fluorescent bulbs and Home Depot accepts compact fluorescents.



What You Can Do!

- Switch to compact fluorescent light bulbs and recycle spent bulbs.
- Dispose of them safely.
 - Do not put fluorescent bulbs out for garbage collection.
 - Bring household tubes or compact fluorescent bulbs to above locations.

Hazardous Waste Depot

The City of Thunder Bay Household Special Waste Depot is located at John Street Landfill Site.

What You Can Do!

- Take hazardous substances that are no longer needed to the landfill site for safe disposal.
- Solvents, paints, toxic cleaners, batteries, propane tanks and used oil can be taken to the depot free of charge. For more information call: 623-5256.

School Programs

Some local schools are taking on cool initiatives. These include:

- Paper, tetra pack, milk carton and plastic bottle recycling.
- Plastic recycling from student lunches.
- Community collection site for plastic bags which are then sent to Edmonton for recycling.
- Composting and vermi-composting which is also used for the school garden.
- Encouraging kids to pack litterless lunches.

What You Can Do!

- Find out what is being done at your local school and help support their initiatives.
- Encourage the parent council at your neighborhood school to initiate and support a healthy environment program.



Home Renovations

Before you start renovating an older home, find out if it may contain lead or asbestos.

What You Can Do!

- Download a copy of the safe home renovation series at the following website: www.healthyenvironmentforkids.ca and click on “CPCHE fact Sheets”.
- Check out the yellow pages for asbestos removal companies.

Local Children’s Environmental Health Champions

Champions offer presentations and train-the-trainer sessions to organizations and groups. They work in partnership with other community groups to raise awareness of children’s environmental health issues.

What You Can Do!

- Contact the Thunder Bay District Health Unit at 625-8823 for more information.

Lead Reduction Program

The City is providing testing services to one hundred homes that may have lead plumbing.



What You Can Do!

- Contact the City of Thunder Bay to have your home tested if it was built before 1955.
- Flush water that has been standing in pipes for several hours for 5 minutes before using for cooking or drinking if you suspect your water may have lead.
- Don’t use water from the hot water tank for cooking. Use water from the cold water tap.

Local Food Programs

There are many local food programs in Thunder Bay ranging from Farmers’ Markets to community gardens and Grow-a-Row programs.



What You Can Do!

- Visit the Country Market and other Farmers’ Markets.
- Find out where you can purchase local food by obtaining a copy of “Get Fresh! In Thunder Bay- Your Guide to Local Food” from the Health Unit or go online at www.nwofood.com.
- Find out more by calling the Food Action Network at 625-5956.



Artwork by Kali Hines



Old Medicine Return Program

Most pharmacies in Thunder Bay accept old medicines, prescription and non-prescription, for safe disposal.

What You Can Do!

- Get rid of unused or unneeded medicines.
- Call your pharmacy to find out what you can return.
- Do not flush your old medication down the toilet or drain as they get into the water system.
- Do not dispose of them in the landfill as they are absorbed into the soil.

Pesticide Reduction

The Citizens Concerned about Pesticides (CCAP) group works with the City of Thunder Bay to raise awareness about alternatives to pesticide use and to reduce the use of pesticides in Thunder Bay.

What You Can Do!

- Contact the group at pesticidfreethunderbay@shaw.ca for information on lawn care alternatives and dates for information sessions on pesticide-free lawn and garden care.
- Contact CCAP if you would like a lawn sign identifying your yard as pesticide free.

Recycling Program

The City offers a curbside recycling program.

What You Can Do!

- Check your garbage calendar to find out about recycling days in your neighborhood and what to recycle. Need a calendar? Call 625-2195.
- Check out Mr Green's Guide: Recycle It! Reuse It! Reduce Waste! online at www.thunderbay.ca or get your copy at the public libraries or EcoSuperior.



Artwork by Holly Sutherland



Rain Barrel, Composter and Recycling Bag Program

Rain barrels, composters and recycling bags are available for purchase at EcoSuperior at 212 Miles Street.

What You Can Do!

- Visit EcoSuperior for more details.
- Help with waste reduction, recycling and water conservation.

Ultraviolet (UV) Radiation

Many health care organizations, including the Thunder Bay District Health Unit, promote sun safety and discourage artificial tanning.

What You Can Do!

- Slip on a shirt with sleeves.
- Wear UV-protective sunglasses and a wide-brimmed hat.
- Slop on some sunscreen with a minimum of SPF 15 about 30 minutes before going outside. Sunscreen is not recommended for babies under 6 months of age.
- Seek shade during peak hours of 11 am to 4 pm. Keep babies under one year of age out of direct sunlight.
- Tanning beds are not recommended for anyone, especially children!

Tobacco Free Parks and Beaches

Children deserve a clean and healthy outdoor place to play that is litter-free as well as smoke-free.

What You Can Do!

- Be a role model. Don't smoke or chew tobacco where children are playing.
- Dispose of garbage created from tobacco industry products i.e., cigarette butts, packaging and spit tobacco cans.
- Display a green tree magnet in support of tobacco free parks and beaches. Contact the Health Unit at 625-5982.

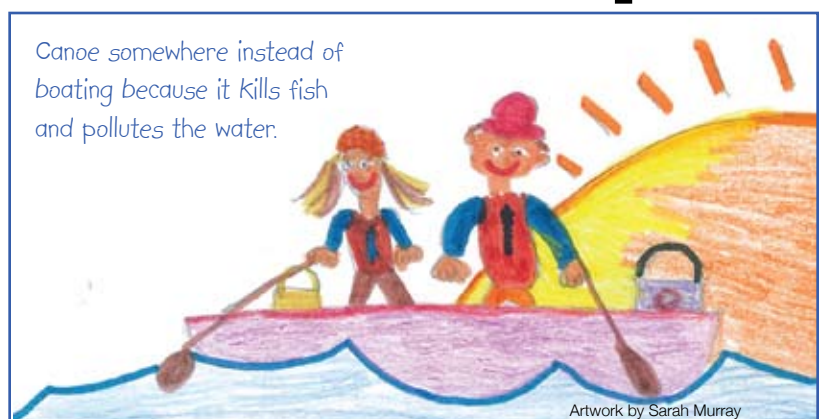


Tobacco Free Sports

This program helps sports organizations develop tobacco free policies.

What You Can Do!

- Find out if your child's sport organization has a policy. If not, advocate for one.
- All volunteer coaches are encouraged to talk to athletes about the ill effects of using tobacco industry products.
- For more information call 625-5982 or visit www.tbdhu.com.



Tobacco-Free
sports



Water Restriction Bylaw

The City has a water restriction bylaw to limit outdoor water use by home owners.

What You Can Do!

- Follow the bylaw by only using water outdoors on even days for even street numbers and odd days for odd street numbers.
- Use a bucket of water to wash cars.
- Use rain water to water flowers and your garden.
- City of Thunder Bay water conservation programs are delivered by EcoSuperior at 624-2140.

Well Aware Program

The program sends a trained Water Guide to your home to conduct a guided self assessment of your well and septic to help you identify and address issues that may affect the safety of your drinking water.

The home visit service is free of charge, but a small mileage fee applies.

What You Can Do!

- Be aware of proper well and septic system maintenance if your water comes from a well.
- Visit www.wellaware.ca or EcoSuperior for more details.

ARE YOU READY TO TAKE THE CHALLENGE?

Are you ready to take the environment challenge to keep our children healthy? We want to find out what you are doing. Every small change makes a difference. Visit www.tbdhu.com and search “Home Environment” to download the challenge form or call 625-8823 to find out more. Prizes to be won!

Where Can I Get More Information?

Canadian Partnership for Children’s Health and the Environment

www.healthyenvironmentforkids.ca

City of Thunder Bay

www.thunderbay.ca

EarthWiseThunder Bay

www.earthwisethunderbay.com

EcoSuperior

www.ecosuperior.org

Thunder Bay District Health Unit

www.tbdhu.com and search “Home Environment”



A Message from the Thunder Bay Children's Advocate & the Co-Chairs of the Thunder Bay Children's Charter Coalition

The Children's Charter Coalition is very pleased to bring you the 2008 report on children's health and the environment. Each year the coalition produces a report for the community highlighting one of the rights in the Charter. The Children's Charter states that all children deserve to have a safe and comfortable place to live. With increasing concerns about the effects that exposures to indoor and outdoor contaminants can have on the health and safety of children and pregnant women, children's environmental health is a topic of growing interest. We hope this report will inform you and encourage you to start or to continue actions that will make our earth a safer place for children and for everyone. The earth is our home and we all deserve a safe and comfortable home.

We are also pleased to include artwork by the winners of the children's environmental health art contest held in the spring 2008. We would like to thank Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and the Environment (CPCHE), EcoSuperior, EarthWise Thunder Bay, Lakehead Elementary Teachers of Ontario and the Thunder Bay District Health Unit for their contribution to the writing of the report.

The Thunder Bay Children's Charter Coalition is made up of people and organizations that care about children and want to put their needs first. The Charter was created in 2004 based on the United Nations convention on the Rights of the Child and endorsed by the City of Thunder Bay. For more information about the Children's Charter Coalition please contact Laura at 625-5952 or Lawni at 626-8484.

Councillor Joe Virdiramo
Children's Advocate
City of Thunder Bay

Laura Prodanyk, Co-chair
Public Health Nurse
Thunder Bay District Health Unit

Lawni LaBelle-Paytner, Co-chair
Community Health Worker
NorWest Community
Health Centres

Think Green



Be Green



feel green



Artwork by Brooke P.



Thunder Bay Children's Charter

All children deserve basic rights and freedoms. A fair share of society's resources must be devoted to ensuring this. Families are responsible for raising their children. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child clearly states that working in partnership with communities, all levels of governments have a duty to assist families to fulfill their responsibilities.*

All Thunder Bay children deserve:

- ✓ a quality of life that meets their physical, intellectual, emotional and social needs.
- ✓ to have enough nutritious food every day.
- ✓ to have a safe and comfortable place to live.
- ✓ quality child care and/or early education programs.
- ✓ to have safe places to play, and access to affordable recreational activities.
- ✓ quality primary, secondary, and affordable post secondary education.
- ✓ the resources to ensure life-long good health.
- ✓ to be served by governments that put the health and well-being of children first by ensuring enough funding for children's programs.
- ✓ to be protected from neglect and abuse.
- ✓ to be safe from exploitation.**

* For the purposes of this Charter children are defined as being from birth to eighteen years of age.

** For the purposes of this Charter being exploited means to be used unfairly by someone else to meet their own needs.

Thunder Bay Children's Charter Coalition

- Fair Start
- Our Kids Count
- Healthy Early Years Network
- Children's Centre Thunder Bay
- Thunder Bay Public Library
- Thunder Bay District Health Unit
- NorWest Community Health Centres
- Dilico Anishinabek Family Care
- Lakehead Elementary Teachers of Ontario
- Children's Advocate, City of Thunder Bay
- Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation
- City of Thunder Bay – Community Services Dept.
- Communities Together for Children – Ontario Early Years Centre
- Thunder Bay Indian Friendship Centre

www.tbdhu.com

www.thunderbay.ca