



National Collaborating Centre  
for Determinants of Health  
Centre de collaboration nationale  
des déterminants de la santé

NEWSBLAST

# National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health (NCCDH)

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## DID YOU KNOW?

According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, the literacy skills of some 22 percent of adult Canadians are so limited they are unable to determine the correct dosage from reading a medicine label.

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Our new website has launched at [www.nccdh.ca](http://www.nccdh.ca), with a number of new features and options, and it will continue to evolve over the summer months. Please check back often for updates and send your comments or feedback to [nccdh@stfx.ca](mailto:nccdh@stfx.ca).

## Welcome from NCCDH Scientific Director Hope Beanlands

Welcome to the inaugural newsblast of the National Collaborating Centre for the Determinants of Health (NCCDH). We're excited about some of the changes happening at the Centre and look forward to providing you with regular monthly updates on our activities and some of the information we believe is key to understanding the social determinants of health and how they impact the health of all Canadians.

Summer 2009 will be a busy time for the NCCDH as we focus on strengthening our communication and dissemination activities. You may have noticed that we've launched a new-look website which will continue to evolve and grow over the summer. The website will serve as the main hub for our work, but it will also provide you with opportunities for discussion and interaction. At the same time, the NCCDH recognizes that social media is becoming more prevalent in the healthcare system, and for this reason, you can now follow us on Twitter and Facebook, or interact on our blog.

In the coming months, the NCCDH will be finalizing important strategic plans that will shape our future work. We are excited to continue the progress we have made to understand and share how Early Child Development, as a determinant of health, is impacting the health of Canadians. We are completing a concept paper on this topic with plans to co-host a second forum to showcase our work on public health early child home visiting and a series of capacity building workshops on the use of systematic reviews. We're also looking at other conditions which directly impact the family, social and community environments where children live and develop, such as women and gender equity, employment and working conditions.

We look forward to sharing our work with you, and welcome your comments, thoughts and suggestions on how we can make the National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health even more relevant.

Have a safe and happy summer.

*Hope Beanlands*



[www.nccdh.ca](http://www.nccdh.ca)

## DID YOU KNOW?

The influence of socio-economic status and ethno-racial status on the health of young children and their families is highlighted in the NCCDH Evidence Review (2008).

- \* Based on 2004-05 statistics, almost 12% or 788,000 Canadian children were living in poverty
- \* 6.5 per 1,000 children died in the first year of life in the poorest fifth of Canadian urban neighbourhoods compared to 3.9 per 1,000 in the richest fifth
- \* A Vancouver study found that 38% of kindergarten children living in the lowest-income areas showed low levels of learning readiness compared to 6% of children in the highest-income neighbourhoods
- \* The youngest children (0-4 years) living in impoverished areas were 23% more likely to experience a non-fatal injury relative to their more affluent neighbours
- \* 25% of children living in low-income families are obese compared to 16% within higher-income families

## Understanding the Social Determinants of Health

Our health is determined by more than just access to good health care services (hospitals, health centres etc.), and providers such as doctors, nurses and other health care professionals. How and where we live, work and play makes an enormous difference in how healthy we are. We know that people who grow up in safe, clean neighbourhoods with parks, sidewalks and supermarkets find it easier to be healthy than those who grow up in areas where there are high incidents of crime, no parks, sidewalks or supermarkets and mostly convenience stores and fast food restaurants. It is hard to eat right if you cannot get to a grocery store and hard to get adequate exercise if you are afraid to play outside or go for a walk after work because your neighbourhood is unsafe.

Examples of some of the determinants of health:

- \* Income and social status
- \* Healthy child development
- \* Education
- \* Employment and working conditions
- \* Social environments
- \* Physical environments
- \* Health services
- \* Gender
- \* Culture

The higher our income, the more likely we are to have safe housing, nutritious food, better education and the related conditions which we know lead to better health.

This deceptively simple story, published in *Toward a Healthy Future: Second Report on the Health of Canadians* speaks to the complex set of factors or conditions that determine the level of health of every Canadian.

“Why is Jason in the hospital?  
Because he has a bad infection in his leg.  
But why does he have an infection?  
Because he has a cut on his leg and it got infected.  
But why does he have a cut on his leg?  
Because he was playing in the junk yard next to his apartment building and there was some sharp, jagged steel there that he fell on.  
But why was he playing in a junk yard?  
Because his neighbourhood is kind of run down. A lot of kids play there and there is no one to supervise them.

But why does he live in that neighbourhood?  
Because his parents can't afford a nicer place to live.  
But why can't his parents afford a nicer place to live?  
Because his Dad is unemployed and his Mom is sick.  
But why is his Dad unemployed?  
Because he doesn't have much education and he can't find a job.  
But why ...?”

