

August 12, 2024

From the Office of the Chief Medical Health Officer

Children's Vision Health

A comprehensive eye exam by an optometrist before kindergarten helps support children's healthy development and sets them up for success at school. Early detection and intervention for amblyopia, strabismus, and significant refractive errors are important in this age group for improved outcomes. However, in the Vancouver Coastal Health region, most children do not receive an eye exam prior to kindergarten.

We encourage you to recommend that parents/guardians get their children a comprehensive eye exam by an optometrist before school entry. MSP covers annual eye exams up to age 19, though there may be additional co-pays. Patients should call ahead to their optometrist to confirm costs.

A printable poster with this information is available at vch.eduhealth.ca/en/permalink/phem4514, which can be posted in places visible to patients. It is available in Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, English, Farsi, Punjabi, Spanish and Vietnamese. More information about vision health for children is available at www.vch.ca/en/vision-services-children.

New Canadian Dental Care Plan

The [Canadian Dental Care Plan](#) is newly available for children under 18 years old, adults aged 18 to 64 with a valid Disability Tax Credit certificate, and seniors aged 65 and above who do not have dental insurance. Lack of dental insurance and dental care costs are the most significant barriers to receiving regular dental care. The Canadian Dental Care Plan aims to reduce these barriers for up to 9 million eligible Canadian residents.

Please encourage eligible patients to apply (Canada.ca/dental). To qualify, individuals must not have access to dental insurance, have an adjusted family net income of less than \$90,000, be a Canadian resident for tax purposes, and have filed their tax return in the previous year. Importantly, individuals can still qualify if they have dental coverage through a provincial, territorial, or federal government social program, such as the BC Healthy Kids Program.

More information about available services and resources to support dental health is available at www.vch.ca/en/health-topics/dental-health.

Updated SmartParent Program

[SmartParent](#) is a free prenatal and parenting support program that provides evidence-based information via text messaging to help guide parents through pregnancy and their baby's first year of life. Text message content is tailored to the individual's week of pregnancy and the baby's age, and patients can choose their desired message timing and frequency to suit their schedule and needs. SmartParent is endorsed by the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada and the Canadian Paediatric Society.

We encourage you to promote this program with your pregnant patients and new parents. Patients can enrol by texting the keywords "SmartParent" or "VCH" to the phone number 12323 or by visiting smartparentcanada.ca. More information about the program and how parents can enrol can be found on the website. A printable poster is available at vch.eduhealth.ca/en/permalink/phem4306, which can be posted in places visible to patients.

You can reach a Medical Health Officer at 604.675.3900 | Toll free at 1.855.675.3900

For public health emergencies after hours, contact the Medical Health Officer on call at 604.527.4893

Vancouver Coastal Health Medical Health Officers

Chief Medical Health Officer: Dr. Patricia Daly | Regional Communicable Disease: Dr. Rohit Vijn

Vancouver: Dr. Althea Hayden, Dr. Mark Lysyshyn, Dr. Michael Schwandt, Dr. Ceinwen Pope, Dr. Brandon Yau 604.675.3900

Richmond: Dr. Meena Dawar 604.233.3150 | North Shore: Dr. Alex Choi 604.983.6700 | Coastal Rural: Dr. Moliehi Khaketla 604.984.5070

To receive these updates by email, please contact us at VCHPhysiciansUpdate@vch.ca