

Welcome to the second issue of the Ontario Health Study's quarterly newsletter. Since **you** are the Study, we are excited to update you about recent developments. This issue's feature story is "Privacy and the OHS." We know how important privacy is to you and we take the confidentiality of your personal and health information very seriously. Find out exactly how we do that. As well as reading our newsletter, you can always visit our website at OntarioHealthStudy.ca for updates on Study activities.

OHS News

Thirty-one per cent of Ontario residents recently polled are aware of the Ontario Health Study – a considerable percentage as the Study launched less than a year ago. We'd like to get that number up, however, and we're hoping that you, as early supporters, will help us accomplish that by recommending to family, friends and colleagues that they take part. Currently, more than 31,000 Ontarians have registered for the Study – let's see if we can double that number by the time the next newsletter comes out!

In monitoring the comments you made on the exit survey that accompanied the OHS questionnaire, we've learned that your number one health-related topic of interest is psychosocial health. Other topics generating the greatest number of comments included nutrition, obesity and physical activity, musculoskeletal/bone health, eye health, alternative medicine and environmental issues. A number of these topics will be addressed in future follow-up questionnaires.

OHS in the Community

We'd like to acknowledge some of our supporters who have helped promote the OHS through their community events. Thanks to the Heart & Stroke Foundation of Ontario for inviting us to set up a booth at the Ride for Heart event in Toronto on June 5th (pictured). And thank you to the Ontario Cancer Society for sharing our materials with those taking part at Relay for Life events throughout the province. We'd also like to thank the Ontario Medical Association and the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario for spreading the word about the Study to Ontario's medical community. And a special thanks goes out to MyBindi.com for running stories on their site informing readers about the OHS.



What's Next?

Coming soon to OntarioHealthStudy.ca: a fresh look and feel! We are busy working on our new and improved website, featuring video interviews with OHS researchers and a new page focusing on community events. Watch for the unveiling of our new site later this summer. If you follow us on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/OHS_Study) or like us on [Facebook](https://facebook.com/OHS_Study), we'll announce the official launch date on these social media sites.



OHS Featured Participant

The Ontario Health Study team would like to gratefully acknowledge the contribution of our participant Lori, 39. There are many wonderful reasons for participating in the Study and taking part in the valuable follow-up questionnaires. Here is the main reason Lori takes part:

“Health matters because as a mother of two young boys I want to ensure that they have all the opportunities they can to stay healthy both now and in the future.”

Thank you for making a difference, Lori!

Feature Article: Privacy and the OHS

The Ontario Health Study takes your privacy seriously – employing the most up-to-date Internet technology and strict privacy policies to safeguard your information.

How your information is protected

When you fill out an OHS online questionnaire, your personal health information is protected through the same kind of encryption technology that is used by banks for their customers’ online banking. That technology is the most secure form of Internet browser encryption generally available. David Sutton, Director IT and Information Security Officer for the Ontario Institute of Cancer Research (one of the Study’s four funding partners), says, “I am very confident that the data we receive from OHS participants is well safeguarded and secure. Between myself and Alison van Nie, our Research Ethics Officer and Privacy Officer, we ensure that the right technology tools are employed and that strong policies and procedures are in place and enforced by our staff in order to protect sensitive information.”

Who has access to your information

Your health information is stored on servers in a secure data centre. To access that data centre, staff must first go through doors requiring a physical key and a key card to open them. When they pass through the final door to the data centre, their entrance and exit is logged. To further protect the data servers, there are motion-sensing cameras in the room that are triggered as soon as someone enters. Only a very small number of Ontario Health Study and IT staff have the ability to access the database servers. Sutton adds, “They’ve all had privacy training and information security training and are aware of what safeguards must be enforced to protect this sensitive data.”

Do researchers using my health data know who I am?

Two separate databases exist – one housing your personal health information gathered from your questionnaire answers and the other holding your identifiable personal information, such as your name and address, etc. This allows researchers to look at your health information without knowing your identity when conducting research. It also enables OHS staff to access your contact information without seeing your health data should they need to contact you. A limited number of key OHS staff members have access to a third database that facilitates the linkage of the information contained on the two databases. Furthermore, the data stored on each of the databases is encrypted so if someone were to access any of the database servers without proper authority or credentials, they would not be able to read the encrypted information stored in the databases.

If you have questions about your privacy or the security of your OHS information, please feel free to contact us at info@OntarioHealthStudy.ca.