

REALITY CHECK

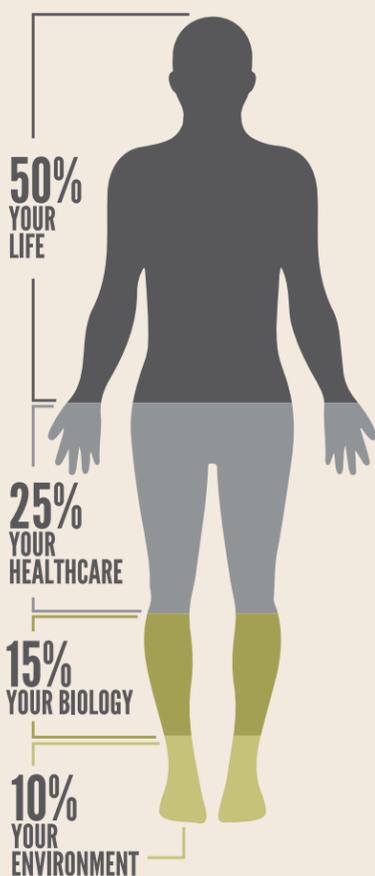


HEALTH & WELLNESS

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Strong health and wellness is the backbone of a productive and successful population. In addition, adequate income, shelter, social safety, employment, educational opportunities and other social factors have a significant influence on the health of wellness of Saultites and a resilient community.

WHAT GOVERNS YOUR HEALTH & WELLNESS?



WHAT ARE THE TRENDS?

The population of Sault Ste. Marie is older than the province, with a median age of 45.7 years old versus 40.4 years old in the province. With an aging population, often comes an increase health and wellness challenges. For example, in a 2013/2014 community health survey only 71.6% of Saultites in 2013/2014 reported good or excellent functional health (accounting for vision, hearing, speech, mobility, dexterity, feelings, cognition and pain) compared to 77.9% of the population in Ontario. Also from this survey, Saultites were more likely than their provincial counterparts to have several chronic conditions including:

- Mood disorders (i.e. depression, bipolar disorder, mania) (10.4% of the population versus 8.6% in Ontario)
- Arthritis (24.3% of the population versus 17.7% in Ontario),
- Heart disease (6.9% of the population versus 4.9% in Ontario),
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder (9.1% of the population versus 4.0% in Ontario),
- High blood pressure (21.0% of the population versus 18.4% in Ontario), and
- Diabetes (8.6% of the population versus 7.0% in Ontario).

Cancer incidence rates for the Algoma region (Sault Ste. Marie data not available) for the 2010-2012 period were higher than the province for 3 of the 4 most common cancer types (prostate cancer in men, lung and bronchus cancer and colorectal cancer; better than the province for breast cancer) and all cancer types overall.

Outside of the myriad of interactions between health and wellness and social factors, a higher prevalence of chronic diseases and incidence of premature mortality may be reflective of health behaviours and lifestyle choices. In the most recent 2013/2014 community health survey, residents of Sault Ste. Marie self-reported a greater likelihood compared to the province of:

- being a current smoker (22.3% versus 16.9%),
 - having an overweight or obese body mass index (57.1% versus 51.8%),
 - not consuming enough daily fruits and vegetables (73.3% versus 61.2%), and
 - participating in heavy drinking episodes (29.4% versus 22.7%).
- Although, more Saultites did self-report being physically active than provincial average (57.5% versus 53.7%).

Positively, the health infrastructure in the city has undergone major improvements in the last decade. A new state of the art hospital has been built, a medical school has opened in the north to train and promote the retention of local doctors, mental health services have expanded and become more integrated, and access to primary care providers has been greatly improved through increased recruitment of physicians and nurse practitioners.

WHAT'S NEW?

Over recent years there has been a shift towards trying to prioritize “coordinated approaches” for complex patients, a greater focus on the role of the social determinants of health and more health efforts directed toward the impacts of preventative medicine. Some important local initiatives that will have an impact on healthcare in the near future include:

- Health Links:** a coordinated healthcare approach focused on most specifically better meeting the needs of patients with multiple complex conditions
- Walk in clinics:** over the past 10 years in Sault Ste. Marie, walk in clinics have been established in the city to help improve access geographically and increase the amount of emergency care
- Healthy Kids Challenge:** a 3-year project started in 2015 focusing on improve the health of our younger residents and their families and helping to promote healthy lifestyle choices from an earlier age.
- Walk in Counselling:** In 2016 a new drop in service for mental health and addictions counselling was established downtown on Queen Street. This service has shown to be a great resource for people who are not able to access the already established services in the city for a variety of reasons.
- Five in Five:** Building on the positive strides made by the Smoke Free Ontario Strategy (e.g. prohibiting smoking in public places), in 2016 the Five in Five initiative was launched forming a multisector partnership aimed at supporting Saultites and Algoma residents to make quit smoking attempts in an effort to reduce the overall smoking population prevalence by 5%. men, lung and bronchus cancer and colorectal cancer; better than the province for breast cancer) and all cancer types overall.

WHAT ELSE SHOULD WE BE DOING?

While there are great things already happening in the community, there are some future directions that could further improve the health and wellness of Saultites.

- Health research hub:** Work towards establishing Sault Ste. Marie as a hub for a medical research centre would help strengthen local health and wellness practices based on best available evidence and informatics.
- Engaging the population using technology:** Given the geographic challenges of northern living, innovative technology for connecting patients and the population to their healthcare and informing the population of the best recent health practices and services.
- Improving cultural sensitivity:** It is important to ensure that all barriers to healthcare access, not only those that are geographical, are removed for our population. One additional way is through the updating of clinical practices to be inclusive and conscious of all cultures and their beliefs.

¹ All data obtained from Canadian Community Health Survey [2013-2014], Statistics Canada, Share File, Ontario MOHLTC, unless otherwise stated. Statistics Canada. 2013. Sault Ste. Marie, CY, Ontario (Code 3557061) (table). National Household Survey (NHS) Profile. 2011 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 99-004-XWE. Ottawa. Released June 26, 2013. <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed January 12, 2017).

² Statistics Canada. 2013. Ontario (Code 35) (table). National Household Survey (NHS) Profile. 2011 Census. Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 99-004-XWE. Ottawa. Released June 26, 2013. <http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E> (accessed January 12, 2017).

³ CCO SEER*Stat Package Release 10 - OCR (Aug. 2015). Pop Est Summary (Statistics Canada, Ontario Ministry Finance), Fall 2014 release, based on the 2011 Census.