



# Use of Health Care Services

## Chapter 12

*Adequate access to health care allows people to receive preventative care and timely emergency care. It also facilitates early detection of some illnesses and ensures effective treatment for diseases.*

### Visits to Family Physician

Eighty-six per cent of York Region residents reported making or trying to make an appointment to see a family physician in the previous 12 months, according to the Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System 2001/2002. Percentages varied by age, with 78% of individuals age 18 to 24 making or trying to make an appointment, to a high of 92.8% among those age 65 and over. Of these respondents, 15% reported difficulty obtaining an appointment. The most common reason cited for this difficulty (65%) was waiting too long for an appointment. Of those who had difficulty getting an appointment, 43% indicated they went to a walk-in medical clinic to seek care.

### Visits to Dentist

The use of dental services helps ensure early identification of dental disease and the utilization of treatment services. According to the Canadian Community Health Survey 2000/2001, 76% of York Region residents indicated that the last time they visited a dentist was less than one year ago. The comparable percentage for Ontario was 69%. Eighty-nine percent of 12 to 19 year olds reported that they visited a dentist less than one year ago, compared to only 58% of adults age 65 and older (Figure 12.1).

### At a Glance

86% of York Region residents (ages 18 and over) made or tried to make an appointment to see a family physician within a twelve-month period.

Of these, 15% indicated that they had difficulty getting an appointment to see a family physician.

The rate at which York Region residents were admitted to hospital decreased 11% between 1997 and 2001.

In 2001, of the 55,442 York Region children screened, 7.7% were found to have urgent dental conditions.

76% of York Region residents reported they had visited a dentist within the last year, according to the Canadian Community Health Survey 2000/2001.

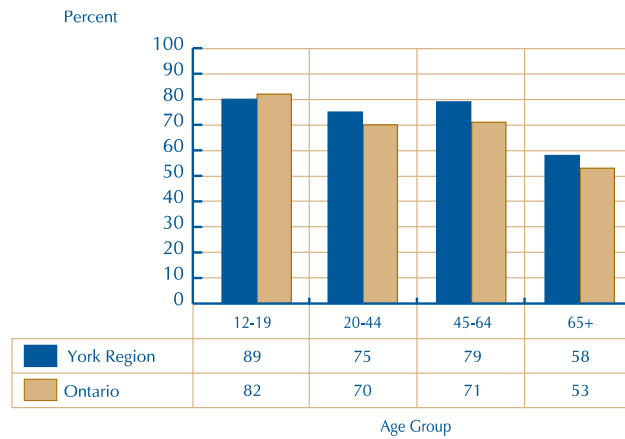


## Working For You

York Region Dental and Nutrition Services Division offers dental clinics for any York Region child with preventative dental needs. Services include:

- oral hygiene instruction
- scaling
- polishing
- topical fluoride
- sealants

Figure 12.1 Visits to a Dentist in the Past 12 Months, by Age York Region and Ontario, 2000/01



Source: Canadian Community Health Survey 2000/01, Cycle 1.1, Statistics Canada, 2002.

## Dental Screening Services

The oral health status of children in York Region has been monitored over the last 20 years through school screenings and surveys by the Dental and Nutrition Services Division of York Region Health Services Department. Collected and published local data has shown that the oral health status of children has improved. In general, York Region children have less dental disease than children living in other parts of Ontario and this is reflected in less untreated decay, fewer teeth extracted because of decay and fewer filled teeth. Several tools are utilized to measure the oral health status of elementary school children in Ontario. One of these, the Dental Health Indices Survey (DIS), collects data on the proportion of children who:

- have never had a cavity,
- have decayed, missing, filled or extracted primary and permanent teeth (def<sup>t</sup>/DMFT Index),
- have gingivitis (inflammation of the gums), and
- have urgent dental conditions such as pain, haemorrhage, trauma or visible decay in permanent or crucial primary teeth.

As of 1998, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) requires all Ontario public health units to conduct the DIS on an annual basis for children in Junior Kindergarten and Senior Kindergarten. The rationale for this is that early decay experience is the greatest predictor for future decay. In 1999-2000 a small sub-sample of the dental health of five-year olds was conducted. These data need to be used with caution due to the small sample size. Ontario-level data is unavailable for comparative purposes.



**Table 12.1 Dental Health Indices  
York Region Children Age 5 Years 1997-2000**

Dental Health	1997-1998 sample size-6,020 age 5 years only	1998-1999 sample size-3,065 age 5 years only	1999-2000 sample size-200* age 5 years only random sample
Caries free	77.4%	78.5%	71.3%
% ever having a cavity	22.6%	21.4%	28.6%
Mean deft/DMF	0.8%	0.8%	0.8%
Gingivitis	27.0%	32.2%	28.6%
Urgent (CINOT eligible)	9.3%	8.3%	n/a

Source: York Region Health Services Department, Dental and Nutrition Services Division, DIS surveys 1997-1998, 1998-1999 and 1999-2000. \*Data may be unreliable due to small sample size

Each of the indices has remained relatively constant over the three survey years with neither improvement nor worsening of oral health, with the exception of an increase in tooth decay among five-year olds in 1999-2000 (Table 12.1). This increase may be real or it may be related to small sample size and hence not representative of the oral health of five-year olds in York Region. Tooth decay in this age group will be monitored over the next few years.

The dental screening program available to all children in York Region from birth to the end of Grade 8 or age 13 (whichever is later) is also used for tracking trends in oral health status. Dental screening is a quick visual inspection by a dental hygienist to see if an obvious dental condition exists. Screening is done annually in York Region elementary schools in Junior Kindergarten, Senior Kindergarten and Grades 2, 4, 6 and 8. Parents are notified if their child needs to see a dentist. Despite the general trend towards improved health of teeth and gums, a significant proportion of children continue to experience urgent dental problems.

Table 12.2 indicates the results for urgent dental problems in York Region children between 1996 and 2001.

**Table 12.2 Urgent Dental Conditions in Children, Grades JK, SK, 2, 4, 6 & 8  
York Region, 1996-2001**

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Number of children screened	44,082	35,246	29,776	54,094	54,004	55,442
Number with urgent dental conditions	2,632	2,603	2,871	3,843	5,003	4,324
Per cent with urgent conditions	5.9%	7.4%	9.6%	7.1%	9.0%	7.7%

Source: York Region Health Services Department, Dental and Nutrition Services Division, York Region Preventive Dental Reports 1996 to 2001.





## Working For You

EMS provide a variety of services to the Regional Municipality of York including:

- emergency response through the 9-1-1 system;
- emergency and non-emergency medical transports;
- mutual aid for surrounding Regions;
- EMS coverage for community events;
- emergency contingency planning with the airport, local hospitals and Long-Term Care facilities in conjunction with allied services;
- operational partnership with the York Regional Police Marine (water rescue) Unit to provide EMS to the Lake Simcoe communities;
- mountain bike program to provide alternative access to patients during special events; and
- public education to York Region residents.

It is also important to note that in the 1999-2000 school year, in the 181 schools in York Region, 5.2% of the children screened had two or more untreated teeth with decay.

## Use of Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

In January 2000, the Regional Municipality of York assumed responsibility for the delivery of land ambulance service. York Region Emergency Medical Services (EMS) was created through the amalgamation of six ambulance services that had previously operated in the Region.<sup>156</sup> Approximately 300 paramedics and support staff provide Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to the Region through the deployment of up to 24 fully equipped ambulances and four Emergency Response Units, 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. York Region's EMS provides both basic and advanced life support as well as emergency and non-emergency care and transport of the ill or injured. Currently, there are 18 EMS stations strategically located throughout York Region.

York Region's population growth and escalating traffic volumes have increased the demand for ambulance service. In 2001, EMS paramedics responded to nearly 72,000 requests for service compared to 60,345 requests in 2000. Forty-three percent (31,221) of the 72,000 requests were classified as urgent/life threatening, while another 6,825 (9.5%) requests were for prompt but non-life threatening situations.

## Hospitalizations

### Hospitalizations from All Causes

Information about hospitalizations reveals why, and how frequently, patients are admitted to hospital, thus shedding light on the types and frequencies of illness in the population.

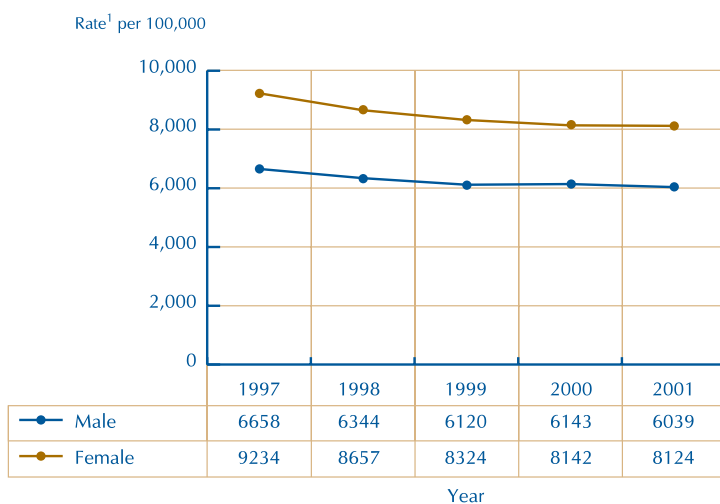
However, changing rates of inpatient hospitalization (also referred to as hospital separations or discharges) cannot be used as a mirror for the health of the population. Rates are also influenced by factors unrelated to health status, such as availability and accessibility of care and administrative policies and procedures. For example, the recent shift towards outpatient surgery has had an impact on the number of inpatient separations and/or the length of stay in hospital.<sup>157</sup>



## Did You Know?

York Region adult (ages 20 and over) inpatient hospitalization rates from all causes were the lowest in the province (1997 to 2001).

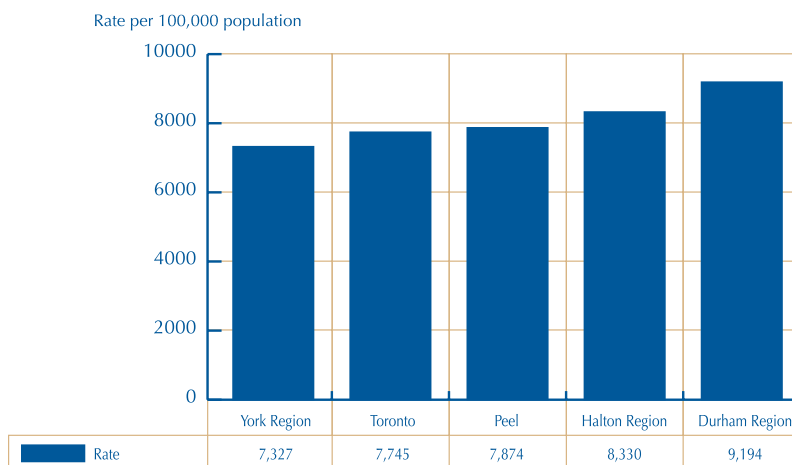
Figure 12.2 Inpatient Hospitalization Rate From All Causes  
York Region, 1997 to 2001



Source: Provincial Health Planning Database, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, 2002.  
1. Age-standardized rate to 1991 adjusted Canadian population standard.

On average there were 46,034 hospitalizations each year between 1997 and 2001 among York Region residents. During this period, hospital separation rates in York Region declined 11% overall, 9% among males and 12% among females (Figure 12.2). Based on the most recent data (2001), overall hospital separation rates in York Region were 19% lower than the provincial average. From 1997 to 2001, the all cause hospitalization rate among York Region residents was lower than other areas in the Greater Toronto Area (Figure 12.3).

Figure 12.3 All Cause Hospitalization Rate  
York Region and Other GTA Health Units, 1997-2001



Source: Provincial Health Planning Database, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, 2002.  
Age-standardized rate to 1991 adjusted Canadian Population standard.





York Region females aged 20 to 44 had hospitalization rates much higher than males of the same age, primarily because of hospitalizations for childbirth. However, among residents aged 45 and over, males have higher rates of hospitalization than females. Residents age 75 and older experienced the highest rate of hospitalizations of all age groups.

From 1997 to 2001, hospitalization rates in York Region decreased for each of the following age groups: age under 19 (-3%), age 20 to 44 (-15%), age 45 to 64 (-13%) and age 65 and over (-13%).

## Major Causes of Hospitalization

Diseases of the cardiovascular system continue to be a major cause of hospitalization among York Region residents, accounting for about 17% of all hospitalizations when childbirth is excluded from the total. Major causes of hospitalization in York Region are shown in Table 12.3.

Table 12.3 Major Causes of Inpatient Hospitalizations\*  
York Region, 2001

Major Cause	Number of Hospitalizations	Percent of Total
Diseases of the circulatory (cardiovascular) system	6,804	13.9
Diseases of the digestive system	5,261	10.7
Cancers	4,014	8.2
Perinatal Conditions	3,177	6.5
Injuries	3,139	6.4
Diseases of the respiratory system	3,128	6.4
Diseases of the genitourinary system	2,779	5.7
Mental disorders	2,233	4.6
All other causes	18,464	37.7
Total	48,999	100

Source: Provincial Health Planning Database, Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care 2002 .  
\*Excluding hospitalizations for childbirth



## Use of Home Care Services

The Community Care Access Centre (CCAC) of York Region is part of the publicly funded health care system. Approximately 38% of its referrals come from the community (family, friends, neighbours, service agencies, etc.), 36% from York Region hospitals, and 26% from Toronto hospitals. CCACs provide a wide range of services:

- In-home services: provide clients with services in the home, such as nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, dietetic counselling, social work, homemaking and personal support services. Case managers assess client and caregiver needs and coordinate services to help clients remain in the community.
- Placement services: which assess a client's eligibility for long-term care and assist clients to access a long-term care facility.
- Information and referral services: which provide information to individuals in the community who are looking for assistance with health or social issues and are not sure where to turn. Referrals to other agencies are made.<sup>158</sup>
- Adult Day Services: which assess a client's need for adult day programs, provides information, and manages waitlists to these programs.

The CCAC of York Region served 22,893 individuals between April 2001 and March 2002. The largest client base (53%) was the 65 and older age group, followed by newborns, children, and youth (17%).<sup>159</sup>

## Use of Long-Term Care Programs and Services

There are currently 78 long-term care facilities, homes for special care, retirement homes and lodging homes in York Region. As of 2002, there were 1,885 beds in the existing 19 long-term care facilities located across York Region. The Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care recently awarded 1,480 additional beds to York Region, for a total of 3,365 beds.

The Regional Municipality of York owns and operates two Long Term Care Facilities - Maple Health Centre (100 beds) and Newmarket Health Centre (100 beds). In June 2002, the Regional Municipality of York was awarded 32 additional beds by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. The construction of the unit for these beds, in the Newmarket Health Centre, will be completed by the end of 2004. In these two facilities special emphasis is placed on meeting the needs of the difficult to serve/hard to place clients with heavy, complex physical, cognitive and/or psychiatric care requirements. As of September 2002, an average of 434 people were on the waiting list for a bed in the Region's long-term care facilities.

### *Working For You*

The Long Term Care and Seniors Branch of the York Region Health Services Department offers the following programs and services to the residents of the Region:

**Long Term Care Facility Program** - provides facility-based health services to individuals 18 years and older, who are no longer able to live independently and require 24-hour care.

**Day & Outreach Programs** - enhance the individual's ability to remain in the community.

**Alternative Community Living Program (ACL)** - a supportive housing program designed for individuals who require assistance with activities of daily living and who want to remain independent in the community. Available in 5 locations throughout the Region.

**Alzheimer's Resource Centres** - contain reference materials, videos, books and journals that relate to Alzheimer's Disease and other dementia illnesses.

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Approximately 450 York Region staff provide services that promote the health, well being and independence of individuals who can no longer live independently. The Long Term Care and Seniors Branch of York Region Health Services Department provides facility-based, community and outreach programs in various locations throughout York Region.

## Unmet Health Care Needs

About 13% of York Region residents age 12 and over who were surveyed felt that there was a time during the previous 12 months in which they needed health care but did not receive it, according to the Canadian Community Health Survey 2000/01. This represents approximately 78,000 people. The percentage of self-perceived unmet health care needs among York Region residents is the same as the Ontario average.

*This chapter describes the use of some key health care services in York Region, such as doctors, dentists, hospitals, and Emergency Medical Services. As well, it describes a number of programs that support vulnerable citizens, including seniors living in the community and in long-term care facilities. Chapter 2 (Our Social Environment) describes some conditions, such as social support, that can bolster the health of York Region residents and hence decrease their vulnerability. The use of some health care services, such as dentists, can also be affected by income, which is discussed in Chapter 2 as a determinant of health. Chapter 5 (Lifestyle Behaviours and Health) describes behaviours that can have a negative impact on health, and thus lead to the use of health care services. Regular contact with a family doctor will help keep York Region residents aware of risks they may be taking with their health. Chapter 8 (Chronic Diseases), Chapter 9 (Injuries), Chapter 10 (Infectious Diseases) and Chapter 11 (Mental Health) all describe conditions that prompt the use of health care services in York Region.*

*The degree of use of health care services can also be affected by the availability and accessibility of these services within the geographical area in which one lives and /or works. The use of health care services (screening and/or direct care) can positively influence the health status of an individual.*

### Working For You

**Support Services for Seniors Program** - provides in-home intervention and assistance services to seniors and persons with physical disabilities.

**Personal Emergency Response Program (PERS)** - provides a one-time subsidy for the rental of a personal emergency response system.

**Psychogeriatric and Mental Health Consulting Service** - provides expertise in behavioural management to the long-term care and community support agencies in York Region.