

Bug Out! Get the Facts on Germs

Q1. What is the Bug Out! program and why was it created?

A1. To help build community resilience and to support the health and social well-being of children, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's (the ministry) Emergency Management Unit (EMU) partnered with the Canadian Red Cross Society to develop a health emergency educational program.

The Bug Out! program is designed to educate school-aged children and their families on infection prevention, and how they can better protect themselves from illness and disease.

All topics and activities are written to be age appropriate; and through this program Ontario is the first province to have this kind of educational programming available to Ontario schools.

Q2. What does the Bug Out! program teach children and why is it important?

A2. We know that emergencies can happen anywhere and at anytime. Just like it is important for families to be prepared by making a family plan and having a 72-hour emergency kit - it is important for children and families to learn how they can prevent the spread of illness and disease.

There are six components to the Bug Out! program, which are based on current infection prevention and control best practices and are linked to Ontario's Health and Physical Education and Science and Technology core curriculum. They include:

1. How bacteria and viruses are spread
2. Hand hygiene
3. Cough and sneeze etiquette
4. Staying home when you are sick (social distancing)
5. Immunization/vaccination
6. Influenza pandemic (and other historical pandemics and health phenomena)

There is also a family program that parents/caregivers and children can use to learn at home as a family.

Q3. Who is the program intended for?

A3. The Bug Out! program is a health emergency educational resource for children ages 6-8; 9-11; and 12&13. The program focuses on educating children on infection prevention and how they can better protect themselves from illness and disease.

There is also a family program that parents/caregivers and children can use to learn at home as a family.

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Q4. What will children and families learn that they don't know already?

A4. Each booklet includes activities that are interesting and fun to learn.

The program is designed to teach children and families simple techniques and habits that will help keep them healthy all year round.

For example, students will learn the importance of proper hand washing, as well as the steps involved. They will learn also learn:

- What are germs and how are they spread?;
- Are germs good or bad for us?;
- How can we stop getting sick?;
- How to cough or sneeze and why do it in our sleeve?; and
- When do we stay home and why?

Q5. Will the Bug Out! program be taught in all schools?

A5. We certainly hope all schools and teachers will use the Bug Out! program in the classrooms across Ontario! We do know that there has been an interest expressed by some schools for this type of programming and we are pleased that we were able to partner with the Canadian Red Cross Society to develop it.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care worked with the Ministry of Education to ensure the Bug Out! program met core curriculum requirements in Ontario so that it can be easily incorporated into lesson plans.

We also ensured that the Bug Out! program was designed in such a way that it was cost effective and teachers can use one or all the activities per age group.

The Bug Out! program is available in English and French.

Q6. What role did the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care have in the program?

A6. The ministry has provided input on the program concepts and design, as well as provided the scientific content necessary to make these resources practical and effective.

The ministry also consulted the Ministry of Education's Curriculum Policy Branch for input and advice so that the Bug Out! program links to Ontario's Health and Physical Education and Science and Technology core curriculum.

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Q7. What role did the Ministry of Education have in the program and will the ministry require teachers and schools to teach this program?

A7. Ministry of Education's Curriculum Policy Branch reviewed both the student activity booklets for each age group and the corresponding facilitator guides; and provided input and advice to ensure that the program links to Ontario's curriculum requirements.

Q8. Where can schools get copies of the Bug Out! program?

A8. The program is available (student activity booklets and corresponding facilitator booklets) on the Canadian Red Cross Society's web site (www.redcross.ca/bugout) and on the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's web site (www.health.gov.on.ca/emergency)

Student and facilitator booklets and the family program are also available for download in English and French.

Q9. Why is the Red Cross involved in Bug Out! program?

A9. The Bug Out! program is the Canadian Red Cross Society's program and is part of the society's existing national disaster awareness educational program for school-aged children - Expect the Unexpected™.

In spring 2007, the Canadian red Cross Society approached the ministry to collaborate on the development of a health emergency preparedness educational program. It was a perfect opportunity for us to work together and educate children and families on the importance of illness prevention!

Q10. You have referred to this as a "health emergencies" educational resource. How does this program prevent or prepare children and families for health emergencies?

A10. Part of our work in emergency management is prevention, and when it comes to one's health, learning basic techniques such the proper way to wash hands or how to cough and sneeze can go a long way in preventing illnesses including an outbreak – especially among young children who are great spreaders for the seasonal flu.

In addition, the lessons that this program teaches can be part of daily healthy habits and will be important in keeping immunizations top mind for parents.

Q11. How much funding did the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care contribute to the development of the program?

A11. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care contributed \$13,050 towards the total cost of the Bug Out! program.