

**News Release**

For Immediate Release

February 12, 2009

**ONTARIANS CONNECT TO MORE HEALTH CARE OPTIONS****Making It Easier To Find The Health Care You Need****NEWS**

Ontarians can now find health care close to home with the click of a mouse.

For the first time, information about local health services is available in a single place: [www.ontario.ca/healthcareoptions](http://www.ontario.ca/healthcareoptions). Using this site, people can find the nearest walk-in and after-hours clinics, urgent care centres, family health teams, general practitioners and emergency rooms by typing in their postal codes.

The new service is being updated regularly, and will soon be expanded to offer information on all front-line health services in Ontario including Community Care Access Centres, laboratories and long-term care homes.

The government is also introducing Health Care Connect, a new program to help people find a family health care provider. Ontarians can call 1-800-445-1822 to register with the program, and those who need care most will be helped first.

Connecting Ontarians to better **health care** is part of the McGuinty government's commitment to strengthening our province by increasing access to family care and reducing emergency room wait times.

**QUOTES**

"This tool will help Ontarians make the right health care choices. The best health care service may be closer than people think," said Premier Dalton McGuinty.

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"When Ontarians are sick or hurt, their first instinct might be to go to an emergency room. This service will help them get the care they need, faster and closer to home," said David Caplan, Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

#### QUICK FACTS

- Hospital emergency rooms in Ontario see more than five million patients every year.
- About half of emergency room visits are for less urgent conditions or non-urgent conditions (for example, chronic back pain or a sore throat).

#### LEARN MORE

- Talk to a registered nurse for [health advice](#).
- Have questions about common health problems? Get answers [here](#).

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See also:

- Backgrounder: [Your Health Care Options](#)
- Backgrounder: [Health Care Connect : Linking Ontarians to a Health Care Provider](#)

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**HEALTH CARE CONNECT:  
LINKING ONTARIANS TO A HEALTH CARE PROVIDER**

February 12, 2009

Health Care Connect is an innovative, made-in-Ontario program devoted to helping Ontarians without a family health care provider find one in their community.

Ontarians without a family health care provider can call 1-800-445-1822 to register for the Health Care Connect patient database. Soon, Ontarians will have the option to register online through [www.ontario.ca/healthcareoptions](http://www.ontario.ca/healthcareoptions).

When registering for the program, callers will be asked a number of questions about their health needs. The information will then be reviewed by a nurse from a local Community Care Access Centre, known as a Care Connector.

The Care Connector will work with local family health care providers in the community to determine what providers may be accepting new patients. Though Care Connectors will work hard to find a family health care provider for the caller, there's no guarantee that they will find a successful match. As a result, people who sign up for Health Care Connect will also be encouraged to continue their own efforts to find a family health care provider.

After referring a patient to a family health care provider, Health Care Connect will give the patient the information he or she needs to schedule an appointment.

Telephone services will be available Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. in English and French with 120 other languages available, as required.

**For public inquiries call ServiceOntario, INFOline at 1-866-532-3161 (Toll-free in Ontario only)**

Steve Erwin, Minister's Office, 416-326-3986  
Andrew Morrison, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care,  
416-314-6197

**ontario.ca/health-news**  
*Disponible en français*

## YOUR HEALTH CARE OPTIONS

February 12, 2009

Ontario is introducing Your Health Care Options website ([www.ontario.ca/healthcareoptions](http://www.ontario.ca/healthcareoptions)) as a source of information that will enable Ontarians to make informed decisions about where to go for their front-line health care needs.

The website directs people to places they can go in their community for immediate care – such as Telehealth Ontario, family health care providers, Family Health Teams, walk-in and after-hours clinics, urgent care centres, and hospital emergency rooms. Listed below is a definition of these health services and what they provide.

<b>Health Care Option</b>	<b>What it is...</b>	<b>How it can help...</b>
Telehealth Ontario	Telehealth Ontario is a free, confidential telephone service people can call to get health advice or general health information from a Registered Nurse.	Provides round-the-clock access, to a qualified health professional – helping you decide whether to care for yourself, make an appointment with your doctor, go to a clinic, contact a community service or go to a hospital emergency room.
Family Health Care Providers	General practitioners, family physicians and nurse practitioners are your family health care providers. They focus on family medicine, diagnose and treat diseases, physical disorders and injuries of patients of all ages.	Provides immediate care for non-emergency situations.
Family Health Team	A Family Health Team brings together different health care providers to deliver the highest possible quality of care for the patient. Family Health Teams are designed to give physicians support from other health care professionals including nurses, nurse practitioners and other professionals who work together to provide you with a range of health care options.	Provides immediate care for non-emergency situations.
Community Health Centres	Community Health Centres are non-profit organizations that provide health and health promotion programs for individuals, families and communities. A health centre is established and governed by a community-elected board of directors.	Provide care for those who have difficulty accessing primary health care due to barriers such as language, culture, physical disabilities, homelessness, poverty or geographic isolation.

Walk-in or after-hours clinic	A walk-in clinic is a non-hospital based clinic where care is provided for patients with uncomplicated and non-emergency needs. Clinic hours usually extend into the evenings and weekends and often do not require an appointment.	Provides immediate care for non-emergency situations, with a range of services similar to those provided in your primary care physician's office.
Urgent Care Centre	Urgent Care Centres provide services to patients without an appointment seeking treatment for non-life threatening conditions during the day, in the evening and on weekends. Urgent Care Centres are equipped to provide all types of treatment, with the exception of surgery.	Provides immediate care for minor or uncomplicated conditions in less urgent situations such as eye injuries, sutures, casts, X-rays, and laboratory tests.
Emergency Room	The emergency room is the department of a hospital responsible for the provision of medical and surgical care to patients arriving at the hospital in need of immediate medical attention.	Provides immediate care for emergency situations – including serious or life-threatening illnesses or injuries.

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