

Connecting Saskatchewan Families to Credible Health Information and Resources

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Introduction: Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Public Health Nutritionists (PHNtr) in Saskatchewan wanted to re-evaluate the ways health information and resources are provided to caregivers of children ages 0-5.

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to identify what health information and resources caregivers want to access and how they want it provided to them.

Methods: An online survey was distributed to caregivers of children aged 0-5 in Saskatchewan using social media through the Saskatchewan Health Authority. Data collection began on January 29, 2021, and continued until February 19, 2021.

Results: A total of 1,809 individuals participated in the survey. The majority of participants, 66.7% (n=1044/1566) were 31-40 years. The most preferred methods for obtaining health information before and after COVID-19 were individual consults with healthcare professionals (75.2%, n=1213/1614; 72.3%, n=1166/1613) and websites/search engines (71.4%, n=1153/1614; 67.2%, n=1084/1613). Despite the many challenges associated with the pandemic, our research demonstrated that participants want health information disseminated to them in a similar manner to before the COVID-19 pandemic. The majority of participants, 53.8% (n=868) reported that it was more difficult to access in-person resources. Furthermore, 48.2% (n=778) reported that their reliance on online resources has increased. Health information that caregivers wanted varied significantly in relation to food and feeding, parenting, and health and safety. Caregivers of children aged 0-5 years want to know more about menu planning, communicating with their child(ren), and setting limits.

Conclusions: Caregivers prefer to obtain health information through online platforms including websites and social media, as well as during in-person appointments with their healthcare providers. This study found that residents of Saskatchewan are not using the handouts and pamphlets PHNtr's are creating as much as online resources. There is a need for more online resources and information showing caregivers how to find credible health information online.