Managing symptoms during cancer—an important part of your care

What we are doing to help

People with cancer may have a number of symptoms during cancer treatment including tiredness, feeling sad and worried, low appetite, shortness of breath and pain. The Odette Cancer Centre staff are here to help you with managing these symptoms in many different ways. The first step to understanding your symptoms and getting you the help you may need is to have you complete a symptom screen form every time you come to clinic. You can do this at one of the computer kiosks on the first floor where a volunteer can help. Your symptom screen is important because it tells the team about what symptoms you have, how severe they are and what needs to be done about them. Some people may have worse symptoms than others and these will be addressed through a more detailed conversation between you and the care team.

There are many ways to help people with cancer related symptoms—from a prescription for pain medication to a visit with a dietitian or social worker to a patient education class. We encourage you to discuss your symptoms with your team and find out what works best for you. Your team can tell you more about patient education that may help. Our patient education classes will teach you about how to deal with feeling tired, eating well during treatment, and shortness of breath. You can register for classes, learn about YouTube videos and web sites and find pamphlets on symptoms by emailing, calling or going to our Patient Education Learning Centre (PEARL).

To contact the PEARL please email us at patienteducation@sunnybrook.ca, call 416.480.4534 or drop by and speak with one of our education volunteers on the 1st floor of the Odette Cancer Centre, beside main reception.

This issue of the Patient & Family Education newsletter is all about managing your symptoms. We hope that it will provide and connect you with the tools you need to help you understand how to get help with these symptoms.

We are here to provide you with the right education, at the right time, in the right way by the right people. △

Tamara Harth
Program Manager and Regional Lead Patient Education Toronto Central North LHIN
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Book Review:

The Essential Cancer Treatment Nutrition Guide & Cookbook

by Elaine Posluns and Edith Stokes, Sunnybrook Registered Dietitians

This new book by Canadian registered dietitian Jean LaMantia (with input from Sunnybrook oncologist Dr. Neil Berinstein) is no ordinary cookbook! It is a wealth of information to help cancer patients and their caregivers get through treatment and beyond by maximizing nutritional health.

“This book is packed with sound nutrition advice and an array of delicious recipes and should definitely be in every cancer patient’s kitchen!”

Based on her experience as a dietitian, cancer survivor and support person for a family member with cancer, Jean truly understands how cancer can impact one’s nutritional needs.

*The Essential Cancer Treatment Nutrition Guide & Cookbook* is research based, offering everything from tips on managing side effects to menu planning and food preparation tips. The 150 recipe options are suitable for various stages in the cancer journey.

The first half of the book provides an excellent reference on cancer treatment’s side effects and nutrition guidelines for managing them. The recipes help incorporate that information with readily available ingredients and fairly uncomplicated preparation.

Recipe categories are enticing and include: reviving breakfasts, restorative soups, uplifting light meals, sustaining snacks, comforting grains, encouraging main dishes and nurturing desserts.

Each recipe highlights symptoms (such as loss of appetite, taste aversions, constipation, dry mouth, weight management, etc.) for which it would be particularly well suited. Bonus features such as nutritional analysis, health benefits and preparation tips are also included. An abundance of practical suggestions and “survivor wisdom” tips are scattered throughout the book and add extra insight and helpful advice.

This book is packed with sound nutrition advice and an array of delicious recipes and should definitely be in every cancer patient’s kitchen!
Chilled melon soup with mango

**Recommended for:** dry mouth, nausea, sore mouth or throat, taste aversions, weight management

2 cups cubed cantaloupe
1 cup diced mango
3/4 cup orange juice
1/2 cup lower-fat plain yogurt
2 tbsp freshly squeezed lime juice
2 tbsp liquid honey
chopped fresh mint (optional)

1. In a food processor or blender combine fruit; puree until smooth. Add orange juice, yogurt, lime juice and honey. Blend until combined. Chill. Serve sprinkled with mint, if desired. Makes 4 servings.

*This recipe courtesy of dietitian Bev Callaghan*

~ Roasted Vegetables recipe on page 5

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This recipe should be adjusted based on your symptoms. Follow this symptom guide:

**For sore mouth or throat:**

- Replace the orange juice and lime juice with unsweetened mango juice or peach nectar.

### Nutritional Analysis per Serving

Calories 130; Fat 1 g; Sodium 36 mg; Carbohydrate 29 g; Fibre 2 g; Protein 3 g

reproduced with permission from page 186, *The Essential Cancer Treatment Nutrition Guide & Cookbook*
Expert advice:

Understanding Distress During Cancer: Tips to Help You Cope with Cancer Related Distress

by Dr. Janet Ellis, Sunnybrook Psychiatrist

A cancer diagnosis can impact people emotionally in many ways. Usually at times of change like diagnosis or end of treatment, anxiety is the main emotion. Stress that continues for a long time like anxiety or physical suffering may lead to feelings of sadness, depression and demoralization. It is important to know the difference between normal stress or distress that happens when getting used to diagnosis or treatment of cancer versus distress that lasts a long time and that impacts your day to day life and may be the onset of something more serious like an anxiety or mood disorder.

Who is at risk for significant stress?

TIP: If you have ongoing distress and you have a family or personal history of depression, anxiety or alcohol/drug use, it may be helpful for you to be seen by a psychiatrist. To find out more about how to do this please call our Patient & Family Support Program at 416-480-4623. If you feel isolated or do not have much family support, or have other stressful life events or serious medical problems, you may need some extra help. Other risk factors for serious depression or anxiety are: certain types of cancer, advanced stage of cancer, poorly controlled pain, or some anticancer drugs.

Why is it important to reduce distress?

TIP: Distress that is not treated may end up in you wanting to stop your treatment, make decisions about your treatment hard for you, have an effect on how you recover from treatment, reduce quality of life and satisfaction with care, reduce your ability to deal with pain, put a strain on your immune system, delay return to work and result in family members suffering.

“Distress that is not treated may...make decisions about your treatment hard for you, have an effect on how you recover from treatment, reduce quality of life.”

Have concerns? Get One-On-One support

Please contact the Patient & Family Support Program, Odette Cancer Centre at 416-480-4623 to meet with a psychologist, psychiatrist or social worker.

~ Story continues on page 12
Roasted vegetables  Recipes continued from page 3

Recommended for: constipation, taste alterations

2 bell peppers (any colour)
2 parsnips, peeled
2 carrots
2 potatoes (unpeeled)
1 onion
1 zucchini
1 bulb fennel
3 cloves garlic
2 tbsp vegetable oil
2 tbsp pure maple syrup or liquid honey
1 tbsp Dijon mustard
2 tbsp chopped fresh herbs (or 2 tsp/10 mL dried)
freshly ground black pepper

1. Chop peppers, parsnips, carrots, potatoes, onion, zucchini and fennel into bite-sized chunks. Spread vegetables and garlic in a prepared pan.

2. In a medium bowl, combine oil, maple syrup, mustard and herbs. Pour over vegetables and toss to coat. Sprinkle with pepper to taste.

3. Roast in preheated 325°F oven, tossing vegetables once, for 30 to 40 minutes or until fork-tender and golden. Makes 8 servings. Δ

This recipe courtesy of dietician Dianna Bihun

This recipe should be adjusted based on your symptoms. Follow this symptom guide:

If food tastes too bitter or metallic:

- Add more maple syrup or honey and lemon juice to taste to each serving

Nutritional Analysis per Serving

Calories 150; Fat 4 g; Sodium 62 mg; Carbohydrate 28 g; Fibre 5 g; Protein 3 g

reproduced with permission from page 226, The Essential Cancer Treatment Nutrition Guide & Cookbook
How to Breathe Easy

What is Dyspnea or shortness of breath?

Normally you breathe without even having to think about it. Dyspnea (shortness of breath) is the feeling of not having enough air to breathe. It can be also be an uncomfortable sensation while breathing. You can have shortness of breath at rest or when you are doing something physical no matter how small the activity.

How you can help myself

- Learn breathing techniques and exercises
- Reduce or stop smoking
- Changes to eating and nutrition
- Learn special relaxation exercises
- Saving energy

Breathing Exercises

1. Find a comfortable position
2. Relax your shoulders and simply breathe
3. Now try breathing in through your nose and out gently through your mouth
4. Count to 3 as you breathe in; hold the breath for 2 counts; count to 6 as you breathe out; repeat 3 to 4 times

- Try this exercise 3 times a day and whenever you feel shortness of breath

Can oxygen help me?

Oxygen may help when the oxygen level in your blood is low. Oxygen levels can be measured easily by placing a sensor over one of your fingers. If your oxygen level is not low, then extra oxygen may not help you breathe easier. Your doctor can decide if oxygen may be helpful for you.

How medication can help with shortness of breath

Your doctor may prescribe morphine to help with your breathing. Morphine is often used to manage shortness of breath.

~ Story continues on page 14

How do the lungs work?

Lungs carry the air you breathe in and out. Air flows into your mouth or nose and through the trachea (wind pipe). The trachea branches to smaller tubes call bronchi. Air reaches alveoli (air sacs) where oxygen is released into the blood.
Expert advice:

The Mind Says, “Go” and the Body Says, “No”: Tips to Help With Cancer-Related Fatigue

by Stephanie Burlein-Hall, Advanced Practice Nurse for Symptom Support and Education

A patient I met with described her experience with cancer related fatigue in the following terms: “The mind says, ‘go’ but the body says, ‘no’”. This always struck me as capturing what it feels like to be fatigued as a result of having cancer. Unlike the fatigue one experiences in day to day life, cancer related fatigue is different. It often:

- interferes with a person’s usual daily activities,
- is not relieved with a rest, and
- is out of proportion to the amount of effort done by a person, meaning, they do just a little bit but feel very exhausted after.

For most patients, fatigue usually becomes worse as they go through treatment but quickly gets better once treatments are finished.

However some treatments may last many months, making it harder to recover from fatigue.

Healthcare providers have known for some time that fatigue is the number one symptom reported by people with all types of cancer. Healthcare team members may not always ask patients about their fatigue, and instead focus their conversations on other symptoms like pain or nausea.

Using a symptom screening tool is one way to help patients report symptoms of fatigue to their healthcare team. Patients at the Odette Cancer Centre are asked to complete a symptom screening before their clinic appointment with their oncologist. Another way patients can describe their fatigue is through the use of a pictogram (on page 13). The pictogram can help to start a conversation and focus on fatigue that you or your loved one may be having.

For the past several years, researchers have looked at the best ways to help patients with cancer related fatigue. The good news is that many of the ways that we can help with managing fatigue as a result of having cancer are things you can do on your own.

Talk to your healthcare team about your symptoms so they can be treated. Symptoms like fever, pain, anemia, anxiety, depression, nausea and poor appetite could be adding to your level of fatigue.

~ Story continues on page 13

Symptom management resources in the PEARL

Fatigue pamphlets:

- Manage Cancer Related Fatigue: For People Affected by Cancer—Sunnybrook
- Living With Advanced Cancer—Canadian Cancer Society

Physical Activity and Fatigue

Physical activity is the most important thing that can make fatigue better. More and more studies show the benefits of exercise for patients even during treatment. Start off with 5 to 10 minutes of activity at a time and slowly increase to a goal of 30 minutes a day including both aerobic and resistance training. Physical activity can lead to better appetite, more energy, less anxiety, fewer symptoms, a better sense of wellbeing and an overall better quality of life. △
Pain is more than just hurting. Pain plays an important role in the body—it lets us know that something is wrong and helps protect the body from harm.

Even though pain is important to the body, it’s also uncomfortable and upsetting. When you’re in pain, it can be harder to fight your cancer or perform day-to-day activities. Pain can make you feel tired. It can interfere with your work, your appetite, your sleep, your social life and relationships with family and friends.

“I had a complicated job, with lots of people reporting to me, but I was more focused on the pain than anything else.”

Pain relief resources:

- Living With Advanced Cancer—Canadian Cancer Society (pamphlet)
- Pain Relief—Canadian Cancer Society (pamphlet)

Contact the PEARL:
- beside Main Reception, 1st floor, Odette Cancer Centre
- 416-480-4534
- patienteducation@sunnybrook.ca

Do you have suggestions about how we can better serve you and your educational needs?

Please email us at:
patienteducation@sunnybrook.ca

Causes of pain

Cancer pain can be caused by the cancer itself, medical tests or procedures and cancer treatments. Your healthcare team will try to find out what is causing your pain and take steps to relieve it.

Pain from a tumour

Cancer tumours can cause pain as they grow—they press on the areas around them. For example, a tumour can cause pain if it presses on bones, nerves or body organs or tubes in the body such as your colon. Removing or shrinking tumours with surgery or cancer treatments like chemotherapy or radiation often helps relieve this pain.

Pain from medical tests

Some of the tests used to find cancer or to see how well treatment is working can hurt. Fear of pain can make some people not want to have these tests. If you’re worried, talk to your doctor or nurse before the test or procedure to see how they can reduce any pain. Methods such as imagery or deep breathing can also help.

Pain from treatment

Chemotherapy, radiation therapy, surgery and other cancer treatments may cause pain. For example some chemotherapy drugs cause tingling or burning in the hands or feet and radiation therapy can cause skin irritation. It can be hard when the medical treatments for your cancer have these painful side effects—after all, these therapies are supposed to make you feel better, not worse. Fortunately, most of the pain that comes with these side effects is temporary and goes away after treatment is finished.
Talk to your doctor or another member of your healthcare team if you’re experiencing any painful symptoms. They can prescribe medication or suggest other ways to lessen the pain.

Types of pain

**Bone or muscle (somatic) pain** can happen if cancer spreads to the bones or after you have surgery. This pain is usually in a specific area of the body and can be described as stabbing, dull or aching.

**Organ or soft tissue (visceral) pain.** Viscera are the body’s organs and soft tissues, such as the lungs and stomach. Visceral pain occurs if these organs and tissues are injured, stretched or compressed, for example, by a cancer tumour.

**Nerve (neuropathic) pain** is caused by pressure on the nerves or spinal cord or by damage to nerves. It can come from chemotherapy, radiation treatments, surgery or a tumour pressing on or damaging nerves or the spinal cord. It is commonly described as burning or shooting pain or like “pins and needles”.

**Spinal cord compression** occurs if a tumour grows in the spine and damages the area around the cord or wraps around the spinal cord and its nerves. The first sign of spinal cord compression is often back pain, neck pain or numbness (“pins and needles”). This type of pain can be described as dull, aching, constant and gets worse over time. Spinal cord compression can cause serious damage to your spinal cord and should be treated as soon as possible.
Acute pain comes on quickly and lasts a short time. It can be mild or severe. Acute pain is usually caused by an injury to the body—for example, if you cut your finger with a knife. In cancer treatment, the pain from surgery or from getting a needle is an example of acute pain. The pain usually goes away as the injury heals.

Chronic pain lasts a long time and can be mild to severe. It may start as acute pain and then continue as chronic pain. People with chronic pain may have pain all the time, or the pain may come and go in a pattern. It can be very hard, physically and emotionally, to be in constant pain for a long time. Chronic pain is usually controlled by pain medication taken on a regular schedule.

Breakthrough pain

If you are taking pain medication, you may sometimes have pain that “breaks through” your regular dose. This breakthrough pain can come on quickly and can last a few minutes or for hours. Breakthrough pain can happen many times a day. There are different types of breakthrough pain that include:

- **Incident pain** is caused by an activity such as getting out of a bath or out of bed. To prevent incident pain, your healthcare team may suggest taking a certain medicine before you begin the activity that causes the pain. They may also suggest ways to change the activity so it’s less painful.

- **End of dose pain.** With end of dose pain, the effects of your pain medicine wear off before the next dose. For example, you take a medicine that is supposed to control pain for 12 hours but the pain comes back after 10 hours. To control end of dose pain, your healthcare team may suggest a change in your dose or medicine.
Talking about your pain

The first step in relieving and controlling your pain is talking about it and being open and honest with family, friends and your healthcare team.

But sometimes people with cancer don’t want to talk about their pain. Some people worry about upsetting family or appearing weak if they talk honestly about their pain. They may feel that pain is their personal burden or spiritual test, or even that their pain is some kind of punishment. Some may worry that talking about their pain will distract the healthcare team from treating the cancer itself. And others may think it’s not worth talking about pain unless it’s severe.

It might make it easier for you to talk about your pain by knowing that:

- Family members and friends may be upset to hear that you’re in pain but they’re likely to be more upset if you suffer in silence. If you talk about your pain with them, they can help you get it treated.

- Talking about and treating pain is not a sign of weakness or neediness but simply part of your overall cancer treatment. Although some people may choose to suffer through the pain, talking about it and treating it can help give you the strength and energy you need to fight cancer and to enjoy your day to day activities.

- Sharing your beliefs—religious, cultural or other personal reasons why you don’t want pain medicine—will help your healthcare team develop a plan that works for you. Talking about your pain concerns with your spiritual advisor or a spiritual care worker can also help.

Have concerns?
Get One-On-One support

Please contact the Patient & Family Support Program, Odette Cancer Centre at 416-480-4623 to meet with a psychologist, psychiatrist or social worker.

Your healthcare team

Your healthcare team is a group of healthcare professionals who work to treat your cancer and reduce your pain. But you are the most important member of the team, along with family and friends, and should be informed and consulted at every stage of care. Your healthcare team may include:

- Medical doctors—family doctors, oncologists, pain specialists, palliative care specialists, psychiatrists
- Nurses, advanced practice nurses or clinical nurse specialists
- Radiation therapists
- Social workers
- Psychologists
- Physiotherapists
- Occupational therapists
- Dietitians
- Pharmacists
- Spiritual care workers—eg. chaplains.
Understanding Distress During Cancer
continued from page 4

How can I help myself?

**TIP:** Make sure you stay close and connect with the people you love.

- Let other people help you.
- Find support from family, professionals and peer groups.
- Talk about your feelings to someone you trust.
- Identify what is meaningful in your life.
- Set realistic goals.
- Be kind to yourself.
- Take one day at a time.
- Try and do some type of regular mild physical activity like walking (make sure you take it slowly).
- Try to keep a balanced diet (to learn more about this please stop by our Patient & Family Nutrition Resource Centre across from Druxy’s on the ground floor of the Odette Cancer Centre).
- Reduce or avoid alcohol consumption

“Make sure you stay close and connect with the people you love.”

How can I help my loved one?

**TIP:** Listen. When patients tell friends or family that they feel sad, afraid or depressed about their cancer, they are often quickly reassured and told that they “must think or be positive”, which may silence the person who has just reached out for support and comfort. Instead, listen, try to understand and spend time with your loved one. Encourage him/her to think about what has meaning in his/her life and seek professional help if the distress continues.

Who can I see about my emotional distress?

**TIP:** Please tell your oncology team if you are distressed and discuss a referral to psychiatry, psychology or social work. You may contact 416-480-4623 or walk in to the Patient & Family Support Centre on the ground floor of the Odette Cancer Centre and asked to be referred to social work or psychology for help with: practical or financial issues, ways to cope, mild depression/anxiety, breathing and relaxation and family/caregiver or marital issues. Your team can refer you to our psychiatrists at the Odette Cancer Centre if you are having ongoing depression or anxiety affecting your daily living, treatment or ability to

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**Have concerns? Get One-On-One support**

Please contact the Patient & Family Support Program, Odette Cancer Centre at 416-480-4623 to meet with a psychologist, psychiatrist or social worker.
Speak to one of our dietitians about your fatigue. Dietitians can help you make the most of the foods you eat to give you the energy you need to meet your daily activity needs. Just like a car needs gas to work, your body needs the best foods to run well.

Learn about ways to help improve your sleep and manage stress. Not getting enough sleep or having too much stress can make your fatigue worse. At the Odette Cancer Centre we offer a “Feeling Tired” class that will give you more information on how to get better sleep and manage stress.

Practice ways to save your energy for the activities you need to do or enjoy. See the booklet “Manage Cancer Related Fatigue: For People Affected by Cancer” in the PEARL on T1 of the Odette Cancer Centre for many ideas on how to do this.

To find more information and tips on how to cope with cancer related fatigue, visit the PEARL or come to our “Feeling Tired” class where you will learn more about ways to help your fatigue.

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**TIP:** You can find out more about depression, anxiety and other emotional issues by going to our Patient Education and Research Learning Centre (the PEARL) on the 1st floor at the Odette Cancer Centre or by emailing us at patienteducation@sunnybrook.ca to get information on important supports and groups, such as Wellspring, Gilda’s Club and the Canadian Cancer Society.

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The mind says, “Go” and the body says, “No” continued from page 7

Speak to one of our dietitians about your fatigue. Dietitians can help you make the most of the foods you eat to give you the energy you need to meet your daily activity needs. Just like a car needs gas to work, your body needs the best foods to run well.

Learn about ways to help improve your sleep and manage stress. Not getting enough sleep or having too much stress can make your fatigue worse. At the Odette Cancer Centre we offer a “Feeling Tired” class that will give you more information on how to get better sleep and manage stress. You can also call our Patient & Family Support team to get help with the emotional stresses of cancer.

Practice ways to save your energy for the activities you need to do or enjoy. See the booklet “Manage Cancer Related Fatigue: For People Affected by Cancer” in the PEARL on T1 of the Odette Cancer Centre for many ideas on how to do this.

To find more information and tips on how to cope with cancer related fatigue, visit the PEARL or come to our “Feeling Tired” class where you will learn more about ways to help your fatigue.
How to breathe easy continued from page 6

When you slow down your breathing you:

- Relax your shoulder and upper chest muscles
- Gain a sense of control
- Breathe more gently

Managing Daily Activities to Save Your Energy
Shortness of breath will cause you to have less energy overall which can impact on your lifestyle. Finding better ways to use your energy will help you to enjoy the activities that are important to you.

Saving your energy – what might help:

Moving from sitting to standing

- Move your hips forward to the front of the chair, place your feet shoulder width apart
- Place your hands on your legs (not on the arms of the chair)
- Lean forward so your weight is over your legs
- Breathe in to a count of 4
- As you breathe out, push down on your legs and use your hips and legs to lift your body

Change your Environment

- If surfaces are too low, consider using an extra firm cushion on a favourite chair or in the car
- Try to use chairs with armrests
- Elevate a low chair or sofa with blocks
- Organize drawers or cupboards/closets so that frequently used items are within easy reach
- Install a hand held shower

Use assistive devices and adjust self-care routines

- Elevate a low toilet with a raised toilet seat with armrests
- Shower sitting down on an adjustable height shower chair set at the right height for you
- Sit when getting dressed/undressed when possible
- Wear loose fitting clothing that is easy to put on—e.g. slip on shoes

Symptom management classes in the PEARL

The PEARL (Patient Education and research Learning Centre)

Free classes at the PEARL:

- Breathe Easy
- Quit Smoking
- Nutrition Tips
- Feeling Tired?

To register for free classes, call or visit the PEARL.

Contact the PEARL:

- beside Main Reception, 1st floor, Odette Cancer Centre
- 416-480-4534
- patienteducation@sunnybrook.ca
Plan and organize daily and weekly schedules
- Plan each day. Set priorities. Do only what you can without hurrying—pace yourself.
- Stop before you become short of breath
- Alternate heavy tasks or those that use more energy with light tasks
- Consider the best time of day for you to do a task
- Take rest breaks—frequent, shorter rests during activities are of greater benefit than fewer, longer rest periods

Intimacy and Sexual Activity
Talk openly with your partner about any concerns you may have. Intimacy may include expressing affection in many different ways, including sexual activity. Intercourse requires energy and places demands on your heart and lungs. Some tips:
- Have intercourse when you are well rested
- Choose a well supported position and keep weight off your chest
- Use your abdominal breathing

Quitting or Reducing Smoking
According to The Lung Association, quitting smoking is the single best thing you can do to improve your health and quality of life. It is important to know that cigarettes have nicotine, a highly addictive drug. Nicotine addiction can make stopping difficult, but there are ways to help make it easier. △

Help with quitting smoking:
- CAMH Nicotine Dependence Clinic 416-535-8501, ext. 7400
- Smokers Helpline 1-877-513-5333

Do you have an article idea for Patient & Family Education News or suggestions about how we can better serve you and your educational needs? Please email us at patienteducation@sunnybrook.ca

This Newsletter Is Brought To You By
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Providing the Right Education, to the Right People, in the Right Way, at the Right Time
Patient & Family Education Program, Odette Cancer Centre
Patient Education and Research Learning Centre (PEARL)

Do you have questions? Come visit the PEARL!

- free computers, internet use
- free classes
- books and DVDs
- pamphlets

Phone: 416.480.4534
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Open: Monday - Friday • 9:00 am to 4:00 pm
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