



Did you know?

From 1990 through 2008, 1,975 agricultural deaths were recorded in Canada. Of all fatalities, the age group at highest risk are farmers who are over 79 years old. What's more, for every farm fatality in Canada, it's estimated there are 20 to 25 serious injuries. For every serious injury, there are 20 to 25

minor injuries. And for every minor injury, there are 20 to 25 close calls. Treating and promoting healthy living to farmers, therefore, requires some acknowledgement of safe practices on the farm. When you emphasize the importance of safety as part of your patient's general health and wellbeing, you're not only be making a difference for them but also for their family and coworkers.

Learn About Your Patients.

The agricultural sector has become increasingly technical and diverse as a profession, so be careful not to assume you know what their jobs entail. Ask questions to ascertain what exactly they do. Do they work with animals? Do they handle pesticides? Could they be exposed to grain molds? Do they do their own welding or grinding? It might be useful to have a checklist that farm workers can complete prior to their appointments. This checklist will give you some insight to the types of exposure they have to various risk factors (see the sample checklist attached as an appendix). Medical professionals who often work with farmers and ranchers may expect their patients to minimize symptoms or their experience of pain. Be sure to explore even the smallest revelations offered. This information could be crucial in helping you identify health risks.

Understand the Farming Life.

Farm living is unique in many ways, and it's important to understand the effects of this life on your patients' health. Not only do farmers live at their place of work but often so do their spouses, children, or maybe even parents. Your patients may not even be conscious of all the ways environmental factors may be affecting them 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It's important to ask about their water sources, air quality, heat or cold exposure, and excessive noise. Many farmers are passionate about what they do so engaging them in conversation to learn about daily experiences should be relatively easy. Be prepared to ask for clarification on any terminology they use which is unfamiliar to you. Farmers may use technical jargon or acronyms often in conversation.

Provide Lifestyle Counselling.

Farming is a very involving occupation, and farmers may not take the time to look after themselves properly. Emphasize the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Discuss diet and exercise, and the use of non-prescription medications. If your patient smokes, offer them support in trying to quit. Be sure to enquire about their use of alcohol or recreational drugs. Remember that farmers can be subjected to a range of pressures which are beyond their control and in response to this stress, they may put the needs of the farm ahead of their own. It might be helpful to remind your patients often that the farm will undoubtedly suffer if they were to become sick or injured as a result of an extended period of personal neglect.

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Healthy Mind, Healthy Body.

Psychological health is an important part of overall well-being, but it can be necessary to remind your patients of the connection between mind and body. Farmers usually pride themselves on mental toughness and so may be more likely to mask 'weaknesses'. But working closely with family, administering to wounded or dying livestock they've raised from birth, exterminating pests or livestock predators, narrowly avoiding serious injury or witnessing a loved one's injury on the farm can all cause psychological trauma. Ask your patients if there's anything that's been troubling them recently, and encourage them to talk to a trained professional.

Make Positive Suggestions.

There's little value in telling a farmer not to do something that is a necessary part of their job, no matter how unhealthy or unsafe you might think it is. Be sure to keep your advice positive. The best thing you can do is provide information and suggest ways to reduce the risks. Being positive will be more effective overall and will encourage your patients to be honest with you about the risks of their occupation, rather than "trying to avoid a lecture" about something they're unlikely to change.

Encourage Safe Habits. Health and safety are two sides of the same coin, so it's important to counsel your patients about accident prevention. Remind them that safety is a "365 days a year" job, not just something to think about when a close call occurs. Discourage unnecessary risk-taking or taking shortcuts around safety procedures and reinforce the idea that a few extra minutes to do something safely is better than being laid up for weeks with a broken leg, or worse.

Discuss Workplace Safety. If your patient has employees on the farm, remind them of their legal responsibilities when it comes to the health and safety of their workers. Encourage employers to be aware of any medical issues that could affect their employees' safety. A seemingly harmless task for them could be unsafe for a worker with a heart condition or asthma, for example. Those employed on farms should know their rights when it comes to refusing unfair work. Encourage open communication about safety between employers and employees.



Resources

BRITISH COLUMBIA

British Columbia
Agriculture Council
bcac.bc.ca

Farm and Ranch Safety
and Health Association
farsha.bc.ca

WorkSafe BC
worksafebc.com

ALBERTA

Alberta Federation
of Agriculture
afaonline.ca

Alberta Farm Safety
Program
[www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/\\$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/aet623](http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/$department/deptdocs.nsf/all/aet623)

Alberta Farm Safety
Centre
abfarmsafety.com

Workers' Compensation
Board of Alberta
wcb.ab.ca

SASKATCHEWAN

Agricultural Producers
Association of
Saskatchewan
apas.ca

Saskatchewan
Abilities Council
abilitiescouncil.sk.ca

The Agricultural Health
and Safety Network
aghealth.usask.ca

Workers' Compensation
Board of Saskatchewan
wcbask.com

Government of
Saskatchewan –
Labour Relations
and Workplace Safety
sasklabourrelationsboard.com

MANITOBA

Keystone Agricultural
Producers
kap.mb.ca

Workplace Safety
and Health
gov.mb.ca/labour/safety

Workers Compensation
Board of Manitoba
wcb.mb.ca

SafeWork
safemanitoba.com

ONTARIO

Ontario Federation
of Agriculture
ofa.on.ca

Workplace Safety &
Prevention Services
healthandsafetyontario.ca

Ontario Ministry of Labour
labour.gov.on.ca

Workplace Safety
and Insurance Board
of Ontario
wsib.on.ca

QUEBEC

L'Union des producteurs
agricoles
upa.qc.ca

Commission de la santé
et de la sécurité du travail
du Québec
csst.qc.ca

NEW BRUNSWICK

Agricultural Alliance
of New Brunswick
fermenbfarm.ca

Safety Services
New Brunswick
safetyservicesnb.ca

WorkSafeNB
worksafenb.ca

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Newfoundland and
Labrador Federation
of Agriculture
nlfa.ca

Service Newfoundland
and Labrador –
Occupational Health
and Safety
servicenl.gov.nl.ca/ohs

Workplace Health,
Safety and Compensation
Commission of
Newfoundland and
Labrador
whscc.nl.ca

NOVA SCOTIA

Nova Scotia Federation
of Agriculture
nsfa-fane.ca

Society of Farm Safety
Nova Scotia
farmsafetyns.ca

Workers' Compensation
Board of Nova Scotia
wcb.ns.ca

Nova Scotia Labour
and Advanced Education
– Health and Safety
gov.ns.ca/lae/healthandsafety

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Prince Edward Island
Federation of Agriculture
peifa.ca

Workers Compensation
Board of Prince Edward
Island
wcb.pe.ca

Prince Edward
Island Public Service
Commission –
Occupational Health
and Safety
gov.pe.ca/psc/ohs

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Wellness Assessment

Sample Form

This is a confidential document and is intended to be completed privately and shared between health care providers and patients only.

All questions are based on activities over the past 12 months.

Name _____ Age _____ Date _____

Percentage of work time on the farm _____% Off the farm _____%

Type of off-farm work _____

When working off-farm, I am/was exposed to:	Yes	No
Chemicals		
Loud noise		
Heavy lifting		
Dusts (specify)		
Other substances (specify)		

When working on-farm, I work with the following crops and livestock:

Chemicals handled:	Yes	No
Anhydrous ammonia		
Fertilizer –		
Liquid		
Granular		

Pesticides:		
Insecticides		
Herbicides		
Fungicides		
Fumigants		
Other (specify)		

Personal Protective Equipment worn when working with chemicals:	Always	Sometimes	Never
Eye protection			
Chemical resistant gloves			
Chemical resistant boots			
Disposable/chemical resistant coveralls			

Chemical handling practices	Always	Sometimes	Never
Wear clean clothes every day			
Immediately change clothes if contaminated			
Wash contaminated clothing separate from family laundry			
Wash face and hands before eating			
Wash hands before urinating			

Noise exposure:	Yes	No
Work with power tools, machinery, animals		

Do recreational activities, hunt, music, ATVs		
Work off-farm in a noisy environment		
Do you experience:		
Ringing in the ears		
Dizziness		
Difficulty understanding conversation with background noise		

Do you wear **respiratory protection**?

What type? _____

After working where there was dust, fumes, vapours, did you experience:	Never	Occasionally	Constantly
Dry cough			
Chest tightness			
Cough with phlegm			
Throat irritation			
Wheezing chest			
Sinus problems			
Stuffy nose			
Ear popping			

When are any of these symptoms worst? _____

Skin	Yes	No
Do you have any skin spots that have changed in size, colour, shape or thickness		
Areas of skin that bleed or do not heal		
Mouth sores or irritation		
Bones and Joints – Do you have any aches, pain or discomfort in your:	Yes	No
Neck		

Shoulder		
Upper back		
Elbow		
Lower back		
Wrist/hand		
Hip/knee		
Feet		

Medications
 List any prescription or over-the-counter medications you currently take daily or when needed

Name of Medication	Reason for Use and How Often

Family history Do you or any family members (parents, siblings, children) have a history of:	You	Family Member		Relationship		
		Yes	No	Parent	Child	Sibling
Asthma						
Emphysema						
Hay fever						
Family history	You	Family Member		Relationship		

Do you or any family members (parents, siblings, children) have a history of:		Yes	No	Parent	Child	Sibling
Allergies						
Heart disease						
High blood pressure						
Stroke						
Diabetes						
Kidney disease						
Liver disease						
Cancer (specify)						
Arthritis						
Other (specify)						

Your health record – When did you last receive the following health services:	Past year	1-3 years ago	More than 3 years ago	Never
Routine check-up/physical				
Blood pressure check				
Cholesterol check				
Colorectal exam				
Eye exam				
Dental exam				
Diabetes screening				
Flu shot				
Prostate exam (men only)				
	Past year	1-3 years	More than	Never

		ago	3 years ago	
Mammogram (women only)				
Pap smear (women only)				

Stress – Have you had any of the following in the past year:	Yes	No
Poor appetite		
Feelings of extreme loneliness		
Blame yourself for things		
Feeling hopeless about the future		
Worry too much about things		

Questions or issues to ask your health care provider:
