

Sharing the family cottage during the pandemic



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In more usual times, the family cottage is not only a place of relaxation but also a gathering place for extended families to wile away long summer days together. COVID-19 has presented some stumbling blocks to that idyllic vision. While some families may have decided to try and make social circles work so they can enjoy a safe time at the lake, for others, the challenge of creating social circles when there are in-laws and friends to add to the mix, has been a little more difficult. This has resulted in the need for protocols to be established to minimize the risk for all users of the family cottage this summer. According to Karen Rose, communications staff at Hastings Prince Edward Public Health, there are some important elements to include in the protocol, the first being that no one visits if they are feeling unwell. If someone does become ill, a plan should be established in advance for how to return that person to their full-time residence. At no time should there be more than 10 people at the cottage, the maximum group size permitted under provincial regulations at the moment. There is not much concern about the time between visits by family members as long as there is rigorous cleaning of high-touch surfaces such as doors and light switches, according to Rose. Family members are encouraged to bring their own groceries and cleaning supplies. The health unit is also recommending that a list be kept of all people using the cottage, and when, so it will be easier to track contacts should someone come down with the virus. A Digital Guest Book has been established and all visitors to the region are encouraged to register. The intent for this secure and confidential service is to be able to get in touch with individuals should it be determined that they have come into contact with someone with COVID-19. The guestbook can be accessed from www.hpepublichealth.ca. Additionally, provincial regulations have also impacted what families can do once at their cottage. Many long-running regattas and fun days that are part of the cottage season, have had to be cancelled for this year due to the size limits for groups that can gather.