

Board of Health

Monthly Report - Jan. 23, 2003

Inside this issue:

Growth and development curriculum 2

What is the public health message about alcohol use during pregnancy? 3

Infant Hearing Program IHP comes to Leeds, Grenville and Lanark 4

Eat Smart! Is Growing Strong 4

CONTACT US:
We welcome your comments and suggestions for the Board Report at board@healthunit.org



Youth Tobacco Vortal Project

Submitted by Bonnie Schnittker, Public Health Nurse

The Youth Tobacco Vortal Project is part of the Ontario Tobacco Strategy.

Definition:

A Vortal focuses on providing information on the Internet to a group of people with a specific passion or interest.

They are sometimes called 'online communities' or 'vertical portals.'

The project increases awareness of the provincial website called Smoke-FX and will include links to and from our Health Unit's youth tobacco site called YouthEscape.

The provincial site contains all the information about tobacco use, prevention and cessation. The local site is for local information.

What is it that youth in our tri-counties are doing about the subject of tobacco? Check out our new website at www.healthunit.org/youthescape - the Health Unit has established Youth Action sites in Carleton Place, Kemptville and Gananoque. Public health nurses and community facilitators support the youth to look at tobacco situations, define the problem, gather information, develop a plan, take action and evaluate the effectiveness.

The information about what is happening at the three sites will be posted on the YouthEscape website. Other pages on the YouthEscape website will invite youth:

- To post personal stories on quitting smoking
- To submit poetry, art work, photos, and posters related to smoking
- To take part in an opinion poll on an issue of tobacco
- To participate in a quiz developed by a group of youth ...and much more.

The launch of this new site is set for January 20, 2003 - the start of National Non-Smoking Week.

ABOUT US

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RESOURCES

Growth and development curriculum

from the Ontario Physical & Health Educators Association

Public health nurses are scheduled to teach parts of the grade 5 to 8 Growth and Development curriculum in all Public Elementary Schools in the tri-county area during the 2002-03 school year. The nurses are teaching from the NEW OPHEA Curriculum, which is based on the "Canadian Guidelines for Sexual Health Education" issued by Health Canada in 1994. Others requiring assistance may phone Denise Gaulin P.H.N., Chairperson of the Health Unit's School Health Committee, at 613-345-5685, ext. 2232.



KEY ELEMENTS

To encourage sexual health enhancement and responsibility first, through the promotion of positive self-image and self-worth as an aspect of the acceptance of one's evolving sexuality; second, by the integration of sexuality into mutually satisfying mature relationships; and third by the attainment and maintenance of sexual and reproductive health.

To prevent sexual health problems, encompassing unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, and sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse in consideration of their enormous personal, social and economics costs.

To promote the postponement of sexual activity as the preferred health decision through enhancement of self-esteem, increased decision-making, communication and assertiveness skills, and an appreciation of the rewards in exclusive commitment and long standing companionship.

To present information sensitively and age-appropriately.

The following values are the driving forces of the Sexual Health education programs.

VALUE SET

- That the family/home environment is the most significant influence in the development of a child's values and behaviours related to human sexuality
- That self-worth is a key component in personal sexuality
- That respect for the values, beliefs, personal philosophies of faith, and decisions of others be inherent in relationships
- That sexual relationships be based on mutual trust, caring, respect, love and long-standing commitment to one another and an appreciation of the privacy and power of sexual intimacy
- That awareness of human differences is a prerequisite for complex societies
- That students have the information, motivation, skills, and supportive environment to make positive sexual health decisions

What is the public health message about alcohol use during pregnancy?

Submitted by Barbara Guthrie, Public Health Nurse

Public health professionals have the task of educating the public (and other professionals) about the need to avoid alcohol in pregnancy. Often women who have consumed alcohol in pregnancy feel tremendous guilt. Their health care providers may advise them that it is unlikely that any harm was done by their alcohol use. In reality we cannot know for certain whether or not the baby has been harmed. The damage to a developing baby can be very subtle but significant and the mechanisms of damage can be very complex. It is so much better to educate and prevent alcohol use in pregnancy rather than to try to minimize peoples' worries after the fact.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, which involves physical changes, developmental delays, and behavioural problems, is known to result from heavy alcohol use. Conversely, 'no alcohol' causes no harm.

But what about drinking small amounts of alcohol or having an occasional binge (5 or more drinks)? Will that harm an unborn baby?

There is no clear answer to that question at the present time. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism reports that the developing brain and nervous system can be injured by alcohol. Because the brain is very complex and controls a wide range of mental and physical abilities, the effects of injuries from alcohol may be very obvious or very subtle. Some of the more subtle effects are just now being recognized.



<http://www.fasworld.com/home.html>

The stage of brain development when the drinking occurs is also a factor in whether there is injury and in the extent of the injury.

The brain is vulnerable to alcohol throughout pregnancy but in early pregnancy, before pregnancy may be known, alcohol can be particularly harmful.

Higher blood alcohol levels (from binge drinking) do the most obvious harm to the developing brain.

What is recommended about alcohol use in pregnancy?

Because we don't know if any alcohol is safe, it is wise for women who are pregnant or who are planning pregnancies to completely avoid alcohol.

What about unplanned pregnancies?

Women in their reproductive years should consider their drinking habits because 40% of pregnancies are unplanned.

Binge drinking can result in unplanned pregnancy and binge drinking in pregnancy is considered to be especially harmful to an unborn baby. This is a drinking style that all women should avoid.

For pregnant women who worry about having used alcohol, it is important to know that even if a mother drank heavily during parts of her pregnancy, abstinence during the remainder of the pregnancy is likely to have beneficial effects on the developing baby.



<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/childhood-youth/cyfh/fas/whatisfas.html>

Infant Hearing Program IHP comes to Leeds, Grenville and Lanark

Submitted by Marsha Houlahan, Preschool Speech and Language Coordinator and Erin McLean, Public Health Nurse

The Government of Ontario has initiated a province wide program that will ensure that infants born deaf, hard of hearing, or at risk of developing hearing loss in early childhood will be identified and have access to services and supports as early as possible. The Southeastern Infant Hearing Program (IHP), sponsored by the Kingston-Frontenac-Lennox & Addington (KFLA) District Health Unit will be responsible for coordinating the implementation of the IHP in Leeds, Grenville and Lanark.

The IHP Model involves several stages. Each stage of hearing screening involves more advanced screening equipment and techniques. During hearing screening, infants will hear soft tones, and IHP screeners, with the use of automated technology will record the hearing sensitivity of the middle, inner ear and brainstem responses.

In Stage I, hospitals with a postpartum unit will offer hearing screening for all newborns. Infants will receive either a 'pass' or 'refer' result from this screening. Infants receiving a 'refer' result will be scheduled for Stage II screening at a community clinic. In Leeds, Grenville and Lanark, community clinics will be provided in both Smiths Falls and Brockville, and will be staffed by public health nurses. Once again, infants may receive

either a 'pass' or 'refer' result. After a 'refer' result at the community clinic, the infant will be referred for a full assessment with an audiologist. Families living in Leeds, Grenville and Lanark will be able to see an audiologist from the Hotel Dieu Hospital, Kingston in the Smiths Falls office of the Language Express, next to the Health Unit.



Certain infants may be designated 'high risk' for developing hearing loss because of family history, physical anomalies, infections or other conditions present at birth. Babies spending time in a neonatal ICU represent half of the children at risk.

They will be screened before leaving the NICU, and those with a 'refer' result will be referred directly to the audiologist for a complete assessment.

Any infant designated 'high risk', but receiving a 'pass' result, will be offered a follow-up hearing screening by 12 months of age to ensure that hearing difficulties have not developed.

This quick, non-invasive process will be available all across Ontario in the Fall 2002. The Infant Hearing Program has already started in Leeds, Grenville and Lanark in August this year.

For more information, call the Southeastern Regional Infant Hearing Program at 1-800-267-7875.

Eat Smart! Is Growing Strong

Submitted by Laurie Doxtator, Tri-Health Coordinator

This is the second year of the very successful Eat Smart! Program in Leeds, Grenville and Lanark. Under the program, restaurants are awarded an Eat Smart! designation by meeting high standards in the following three areas: having healthier food choices on the menu and by request, having kitchen staff certified in safe food handling and providing more non-smoking seating than required by municipal by-law.

With 28 restaurants qualifying for the 2002-2003 award, we have almost doubled the number of Eat Smart! restaurants in the tri-county area. Eat Smart! restaurants can be recognized by their Eat Smart! certificate and door decal. In conjunction with the launch of the 2002-2003 program, we are pleased to provide an Eat Smart! Dining Guide. If your favorite restaurant is not listed in the guide, please encourage the owner or manager to apply for next year's Eat Smart! award.

Our hectic Canadian lifestyle includes eating out more often than ever before. Choosing an Eat Smart! restaurant is an ideal way to support a healthy lifestyle by ensuring access to safe, nutritious foods in non-smoking environments. The next time you eat out, eat smarter and feel better!



For more information or a copy of the Eat Smart! Dining Guide please call Lynda Earl at 1-800-660-5853 or 613-345-5685 ext. 2215