



Health Matters

A newsletter from the Leeds, Grenville, and Lanark District Health Unit

Spring 2003

<http://www.healthunit.org>

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New Dental Health Awareness Campaign Launched - "2 for 2 is what you do"

Submitted by Lainie Taylor, Certified Dental Assistant

The Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit participated in the province wide launch of a new Dental Health Awareness Campaign "2 for 2 is what you do" on April 2nd, 2003.

This campaign is being promoted by the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care and the Ontario Association of Public Health Dentistry.

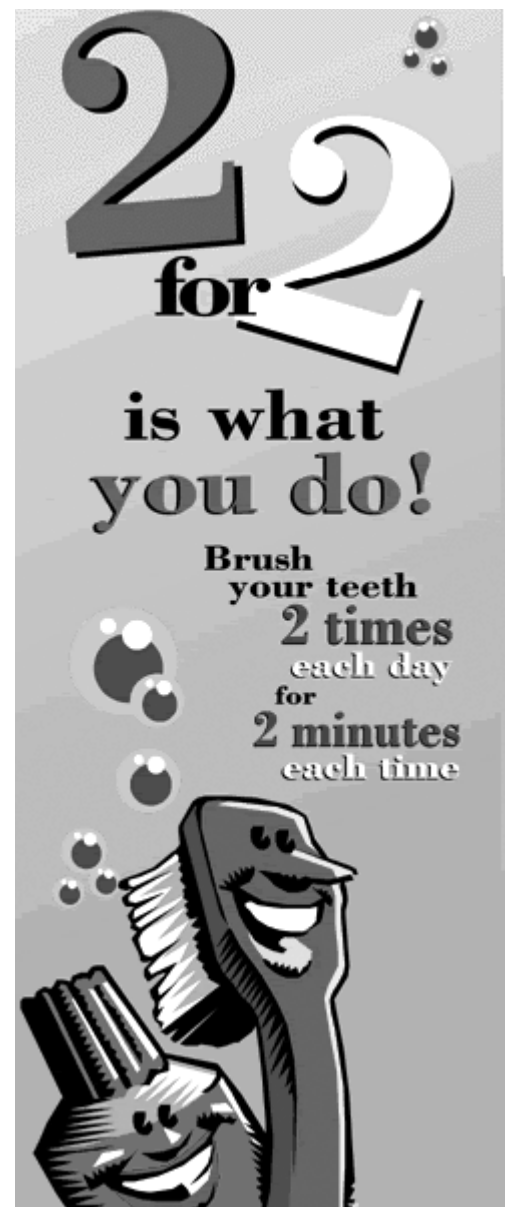
The message is simple: **brush your teeth twice a day for at least two minutes each time.**

Several activities took place during dental health month, April, to promote the message. These included a media campaign, mall display and a visit to selected schools.

On April 2nd, 2003 grade 2 students in selected schools in the tri county area were visited by dental hygienists and dental assistants from the Health Unit. These students participated in a fun and exciting lesson to promote the toothbrushing message. Students also received handouts to take home to reinforce this message.

In addition, the Health Unit is urging adults to practice regular brushing and flossing routines and good eating habits. Adults can play an important role in making dental care part of their child's everyday routine. Parents should set a positive example in their home, remembering that children often model their parent's behavior.

For more information on this program or other dental information please contact your local health unit office.



It Takes Two To Make a Healthy Baby!

Submitted by Louise Mes, Public Health Nurse

When Bob and Judy decided it was time to try “to get pregnant”, they carefully looked at Judy’s health and her lifestyle to make sure their baby would develop normally.

The couple was aware that alcohol, tobacco and other drugs could harm a baby so Judy stayed away from them. She also took a Folic Acid Supplement to reduce the risk of her baby having spina bifida or other neural tube defects. She was careful to follow Canada’s Food

guide to Healthy Eating and to have a regular exercise routine.

Bob and Judy thought they had done everything to get ready.

They forgot that Bob is the other half of the reproductive team. There are lifestyle habits that could affect Bob’s ability to reproduce and to have a normal healthy baby.

Here are some things Bob needs to Know:

- Alcohol can change the quality of sperm
- Smoker’s sperm has a harder time getting into the woman’s egg to create pregnancy; the sperm can’t swim as fast to reach the “ready” eggs. Smoking has also been shown to make it more difficult for a man to get an erection.
- If your body is poorly fed, so are your sperm

Healthy Eating = Healthy Sperm

- Cocaine, heroin and high doses of marijuana can kill sexual interest and decrease sexual performance and sperm counts.
- Toxins or poisons in your environment can affect sperm. (e.g. chemicals, solvents, gases, metals)
- Some medications and diseases (cancer, mumps, diabetes, Hep B, STD’s and HIV) may cause infertility or reduced fertility.
- Heat and excessive exercise can increase scrotal temperature and decrease sperm quantity.
- He can support his partner by controlling his own alcohol, tobacco and drug use and by practising good nutritional habits.
- He can make a difference by learning about pregnancy and by being patient and supportive.

Information Adapted from: *Preconception and Health (Research and Strategies), Best Start: Ontario’s Maternal, Newborn and Early Child Development Resource Centre 2001*

Both men and women need to prepare actively for pregnancy.

Safe Kids Week, June 2-8, 2003

Submitted by Carol Quinlan, Public Health Nurse

Product Safety, Round Up Event

From cribs to car seats, are your kids safe? The Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit urges parents in the Tricounty area to participate in Safe Kids Week activities.

Thousands of children are injured every year by old and unsafe products in their homes. The Health Unit in cooperation with the National Safe Kids Week campaign wants to alert parents to product-related dangers and to help reduce the incidence of childhood injuries.

During Safe Kids Week, the Health Unit will be providing information about:

- Children’s product safety
- The risks involved with using secondhand equipment
- Tips on shopping at secondhand stores, garage sales and more.



As well, the Health Unit will be *participating* in a round- up event. Families will be invited to drop off any no longer used, old or broken equipment for safe disposal *at specified locations*. Examples of products for disposal could include: walkers, cribs, safety gates, car seats, strollers, high chairs, change tables, play pens, bath seats, toys and bike helmets. Incentives will be offered to families who participate. Watch your local paper for further information and drop off points or call your local Health Unit office, as the time for the campaign gets closer.

The Health Unit would like to thank you for doing your part in keeping our children safe.



10 Tips On Evaluating Immunization Information

Submitted by Margaret Hendriks, Public Health Nurse

What about information on the Internet?

How do you know if vaccine information you find on the Internet or in other sources is accurate? Today's media capabilities and the Internet are wonderful tools for making information widely and rapidly available, but they also make readily available information that is not reviewed for scientific accuracy.

TEN TIPS ON EVALUATING IMMUNIZATION INFORMATION ON THE INTERNET

1. The ownership of the site should be clear.

Is the name of the organization or individual posting the information in clear view? Look for highlighted text that tells you more about the author of the site. In some programs, the ownership can be found by clicking "View" and then "Document Source" or "Document Information."

2. The information provided should be based on sound scientific study.

Scientists discover truth by testing their findings repeatedly, to be sure that their thinking and methods are not flawed, influenced by their own assumptions, or marred by special circumstances. Studies with hundreds of participants or cases bear more weight than descriptions of a single case. The most useful studies compare the findings in one group of people or cases with the findings in another group (*control groups*). A mark of sound scientific study is that the findings are endorsed by groups or institutions dedicated to science, such as professional associations or universities.



3. The side should carefully weigh the evidence and acknowledge the limitations of the work.

Think: What does the *weight* of the evidence indicate? If conclusion #1 is found in three studies, but conclusion #2 is found in 30 studies, which is more likely to point the truth? Be wary of people who proclaim that they, and only they, have discovered the "hidden truth." The scientific approach takes time, and often, answers are slow in coming or don't come at all. This can be very frustrating if the answers will have an impact on our, or our children's, health and well-being. Solid researchers, however, are not afraid to address the weaknesses as well as the strengths of their findings, to say that the findings were inconclusive, or to say that additional research is needed before any conclusions can be drawn. A scientifically sound web site will reflect these circumstances.

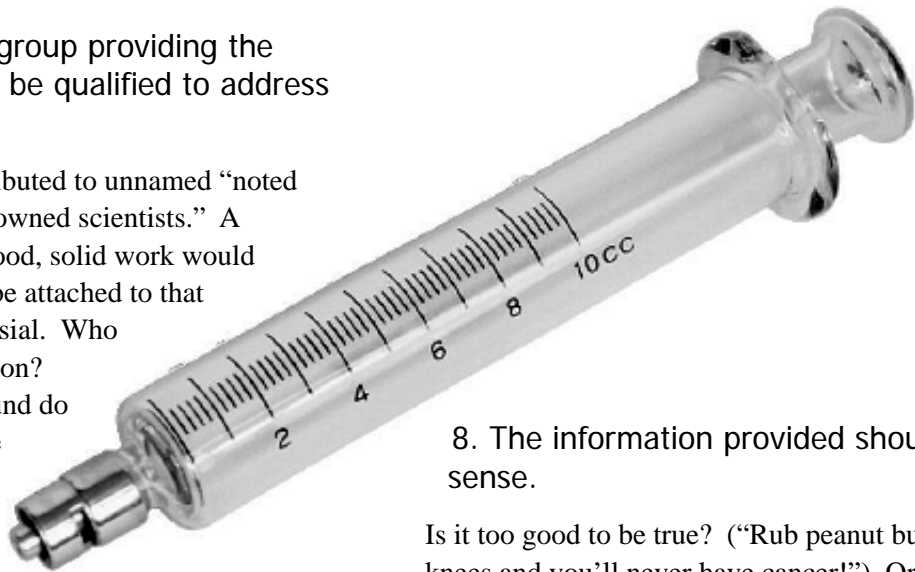
4. Beware of "junk science" and suggestions of "conspiracies."

The hallmarks of junk science are hasty, and often sensational, claims that other scientists have not seen, reviewed, or verified. Media attention does not necessarily mean a claim is true. "Conspiracy" theories often offer a quick and exciting answer to a puzzle. *Think:* If I take apart the pieces of "evidence," do they really fit together again?

CDC National Vaccine Program Office www.cdc.gov/od/nvpo

5. The individuals or group providing the information should be qualified to address the subject matter.

Beware of information attributed to unnamed “noted researchers” or “world-renowned scientists.” A researcher who has done good, solid work would insist that his or her name be attached to that work, even if it’s controversial. Who stands behind the information? What educational background do they have that relates to the health topic area? What other work have they published, and where?



6. Arguments should be based on facts, not conjecture.

Beware of sites that mix fact with fantasy, without distinguishing between the two. As with junk science, the resulting “theories” can be sensational but are not scientifically sound.

www.vaccines-R-us.com

?????

7. The motives of the site should be clear.

Is the site a sales and promotional device? There is nothing wrong with selling books and tapes, or enlisting you in a cause, but motives should be clear.

8. The information provided should make sense.

Is it too good to be true? (“Rub peanut butter on your knees and you’ll never have cancer!”) Or too awful to be true? (“Millions die when injected with vaccines!”)

Then it probably isn’t true.

9. One sign of a scientifically sound Internet site is that it contains references from and to recognized peer-reviewed publications.

10. You should be able to obtain additional information if you need it.

Is an e-mail or postal address, or a telephone number, provided for further information? Is a reading list of source list provided? Is the reading available through a public library, or is the list a source of income for the site owner? If government documents or publications are referenced, remember that they are usually available free or at low cost.

<http://www.cdc.gov/od/nvpo/tips.htm>

Meal Time is Family Time

Submitted by Heather Deegan, Registered Dietitian/Public Health Nutritionist

The daily rush of different family schedules can interfere with meals, especially supper. This can have a negative impact on the eating habits of all family members. Think for a moment – when was the last time you were the only one home at supper time and grabbed a bowl of cereal? Cheese and crackers? A few spoonfuls of ice cream and a handful of potato chips? It happens on occasion, but can lead to poor health over the long term. Without the presence of family members, individuals may not take the time to prepare a healthy, balanced meal for themselves.

Family mealtimes provide the opportunity to eat healthy meals, spend quality family time together, and allow parents to be healthy eating role models for children. It is also a fantastic opportunity to get caught up on the day's activities.

What are your family mealtime challenges?

"We often get take-out when there are not enough groceries in the house to pull a meal together."

Some solutions:

- Plan a few meals for the week *before* going to the grocery store and add needed ingredients to the grocery list.
- Double the recipe so there are leftovers for the next day's lunch or supper meal.
- Stock cupboards with some basic foods to use in a pinch. For example, pasta, canned soup and canned tuna for a tuna noodle casserole with some canned corn on the side.

"My children are too picky. They won't eat anything I make, except boxed macaroni & cheese."

Some solutions:

- There is no need to be a "short order cook". Plan healthy meals and include at least one food that you know your children will eat. Let them select the foods (and amount of food) they want.

- Keep trying to introduce new foods, and re-introduce foods that children have rejected in the past. Sometimes children need time to "warm-up" to a new food.
- Avoid mealtime struggles by making the foods you know your children love healthier. For example, add frozen vegetables to macaroni & cheese (time saver: add them while the pasta is boiling, during the last few minutes of cooking time).

"My family doesn't have the time or interest in eating together."

Some solutions:

- Schedule activities so time is available for a family meal.
- Be flexible with mealtimes to accommodate different family schedules.
- Involve family members in meal preparation and clean-up. Children not only learn skills by washing, peeling and mixing foods, they are more likely to eat foods they have helped prepare.
- Keep family members interested by taking turns choosing meals and trying new recipes.
- Eat at the dinner table, turn off the TV and focus on family discussion.

Eating meals together as a family every day may not be realistic, and it may be more difficult once children become teenagers. However, there are many benefits to this family time. Have a look at your family's schedule and see where you can fit in your next family meal.

If you would like more ideas for making time to eat together with your family, please call the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit's Health Action Line at 1-800-660-5853 (or 345-5685) and ask to speak with a Registered Dietitian. Also, check the website at www.healthunit.org/nutrition for more nutrition information and web links.

What Moves You?

Submitted by Danielle Shewfelt, Public Health Nurse

Are you worried about young people these days not being active enough? A great way to get kids active is leading by example. Show them how physical activity is important for everyone. Consider starting a walking club. No equipment is required, just a place to walk, people to walk with, and some tips on how to get started!



Step 1: Make a Flyer
 Include information about your walking club and outline the many benefits of walking. Send your flyer to individuals you think might be interested in joining, or post it in your

workplace. List a contact number on the flyer so people can get in touch with you.

Step 3: Make Some Decisions
 Decide when and where you are going to walk. Decide on a club name, pick a start date and then get moving!

Step 4: Bring a Friend
 Walking is fun and walking clubs are a great way to meet new people. Don't get discouraged if your club starts slowly at first.

If you would like more information, please contact Danielle Shewfelt, Public Health Nurse at (613) 256-1203. We can help you get your walking club started by offering advice, support and physical activity resources.

Step 2: Set Up a Contact List
 Ask people to record their name and phone number as well as their preferred time(s) to walk on a contact list.

Fit & Fun

How far can you go?

	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
Week 1							
Week 2							
Week 3							
Week 4							
Week 5							
Week 6							

Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living from Health Canada recommends that you do a variety of endurance, flexibility and strength activities.

How Much Time does it take in a day?
 Light Effort: 60 min (light walking)
 Moderate Effort: 30-40 min (brisk walking)
 Vigorous Effort: 20-30 min (jogging)

The more effort you make the less time you need to spend.
 If you can't find a block of time walking you can break it into 10 minute blocks of time and add up.

Why is Physical Activity so great?

YOU CAN ...

- make you feel better about yourself
- help reduce your stress level
- help you sleep better
- help you feel stronger
- give you more energy
- help prevent chronic diseases like heart disease, stroke, osteoporosis, cancer and diabetes
- strengthen bones and muscles



Let's Beat Those Pesky Mosquitoes

Submitted by Kim McCann, Public Health Inspector

Spring has sprung which means summer is soon to come and those pesky little mosquitoes will be out on the buzz. When mosquitoes are on the buzz and biting they can spread a disease called West Nile Virus.



West Nile Virus is spread to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. It is true that West Nile Virus can cause an infection in the brain, but it is very rare. Healthy adults or children may become infected with the virus but the chances of becoming severely ill are very low. Most people that become severely ill are those who are elderly or immuno-compromised. Protecting yourself from getting bitten by mosquitoes

is the best way of avoiding West Nile Virus. Here are some helpful tips to beat those pesky mosquito bites:

1. Use insect repellent containing 30-35% DEET.
2. Health Canada recommends that repellents used on children 2-12 years of age contains no more than 10% DEET.
3. Do not use insect repellents on children less than 2 years old; so be sure to cover up all exposed skin.
4. Remove any standing water on your property to prevent (remove) any mosquito breeding areas.

For more information on West Nile Virus control and personal protection, please visit our Health Unit's website www.healthunit.org.

Health Matters is Well-Received by School Staff

Submitted by Shani Gates, Planning & Evaluation Consultant

Many thanks to the 67 school staff who completed the feedback form distributed with the Winter 2003 edition of *Health Matters*. Results show that 99% of respondents read *Health Matters* and 94% use the information contained in the newsletter. All respondents indicated that *Health Matters* increases their awareness of Health Unit services and 94% report that the newsletter improves knowledge of health-related issues.

The information in *Health Matters* is used in a variety of ways, including

- 25 (40.3%) respondents **posted information on bulletin boards**
- 23 (37.1%) respondents **inserted information into parent newsletters**
- 15 (24.2%) respondents **called the Health Unit for resources**
- 13 (20.9%) respondents **called the Health Unit for services**
- 11 (17.7%) respondents **used the information in the classroom with students**
- 10 (16.1%) respondents **used the information for personal and family needs**
- 8 (12.9%) respondents **distributed information directly to parents or to parent council**

The Health Unit is considering suggestions made on the feedback form to improve *Health Matters*. One such suggestion was to include more information of interest to students. The School Health Committee is looking at posting such information on our website. Keep reading for the progress on that initiative.