



# Health Matters

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

Winter 2004

<http://www.healthunit.org>

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## Home Safety Challenge, March 2004

*Submitted by Carol Quinlan, Public Health Nurse*

We need your help in reducing preventable injuries and deaths to children at home. The Leeds, Grenville and Lanark Health Unit will be conducting a **Home Safety Challenge**, which will run March 1- 31,2004.

More Canadian children die from injuries each year, than from any other childhood disease. Thousands more are injured each year, sometimes for life.

One of the most common locations for injury to occur is in the child's own home, the home of a relative or a close family friend. Becoming aware of hazards around the house and creating a safer home environment can help prevent injuries.

Parents and caregivers will be asked to do a home inspection using a home safety checklist to make their homes safer for their children. They will then be asked to fill out a brief questionnaire that will be submitted as a ballot to enter a contest to win prizes for their efforts in completing the challenge.

For more information about the Home Safety Challenge and where to pick up your home safety checklist, please call your local Health Unit office or the Health Action Line at 1-800-660-5853. The checklist and contest ballot can also be downloaded from our Health Unit website, starting March 1, 2004 at [www.healthunit.org](http://www.healthunit.org).



## T.V Turnoff

It is almost here again!! Local schools will be encouraged and invited to participate in this years T.V turnoff week which will take place March 29-April 4, 2004. Students will be required to turn off all screens, choose healthy foods and be active during each day of the challenge. Watch for letters of invitation to participate in this event!

## Bear The Winter, Don't Bare Your Skin

*Submitted by Tawnya Boileau, Public Health Nurse*

The Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit is challenging you to get more physically active this winter. Activate don't hibernate. However, before you get out to "Bear" our great Canadian winter remember to protect your skin and eyes from the sun.

Even in winter, skin and eyes are vulnerable to sun damage. UV radiation, the sun's invisible rays, is present all year and is responsible for premature aging, burning and skin cancer. These rays can be more intense when there is snow, as snow can reflect up to 80% of the sun's rays. In addition, UV radiation is more intense at higher altitudes due to the thinner atmosphere. Therefore, the combination of the reflective surface of the snow and high altitudes when skiing or snowboarding can expose you to an unhealthy dose of UV radiation from the sun.

**Here are some tips to stay "sun safe" this winter:**

- **Cover Up.** Wear appropriate winter clothing such as coats, hats, scarves and mitts. The more covered you are the less exposed you are to UV radiation.
- **Wear Sunscreen.** Apply sunscreen to exposed areas such as face, ears, neck and hands. Choose a sunscreen with a SPF 15 or greater that protects against both UVA and UVB rays. Apply sunscreen 20 minutes before exposure to the sun and reapply every few hours.
- **Protect Your Eyes.** UV radiation reflecting off snow can damage your eyes; even burn/inflame your corneas, a condition called "snow blindness". Exposure to UV rays can also increase your risk of cataracts. Choose sunglasses or goggles that protect against both UVA and UVB rays. Select eye protection that wraparound and fit snug, so that sunlight can't shine over the top or sides of your eyewear.
- **"Spot Check" Your Moles Monthly.** Report to your health care provider any changes in your moles such as: asymmetry, border irregularities, color variances or changes in size. To see what these changes look like check out our website at [www.healthunit.org](http://www.healthunit.org).
- **Protect Your Children.** Keep children under one year of age out of the direct sun. Once infants turn 6 months of age, begin using a sunscreen for added protection. Children's skin is more sensitive to UV radiation and sunburns experienced in childhood have been linked to an increased risk of developing skin cancer later in life.

## RACING AGAINST DRUGS 2004

*Submitted by Kelly Munroe, Public Health Nurse*

Once again Racing Against Drugs, the community based drug and alcohol awareness and injury prevention program, is coming to our area. This popular educational event for Grade 5 and 6 students will be held from May 18 to May 21, 2004 in Smiths Falls. Racing Against Drugs is a four-day event with two sessions each day. Students attend a 2-hour morning or afternoon session.

When students arrive at the Racing Against Drugs event they will see approximately 25 pit stops set up. A different community agency or group runs each "pit stop" and delivers to the students an interactive seven-minute presentation with a clear and distinct message related to substance use or injury prevention. Students rotate around the venue and will have a chance to visit approximately ten of the 25 pit stops. Following this the students are then invited to watch their teachers race remote control cars on a giant racetrack. The "Final Race" matches teachers from one school against teachers from other schools attending the same session. This provides an entertaining conclusion to the event and school moral booster for the students.

Teachers and/or schools interested in enrolling their classes need to do so quickly by filling out your fax back registration form by Friday March 5, 2004. If you have not received this form contact Lynda Earl at 345-5685 or 1-800-660-5853.



## Oh Canada! Getting active in the winter, eh!

*Submitted by Danielle Shewfelt, Public Health Nurse*



Canadians want to hibernate in the winter making excuses like it is too cold, too snowy or icy to do the same summer or fall activities. Maybe the problem is that we are looking at it all wrong. This is Canada! It is a beautiful country with long winters. Lets try enjoying the unique nature of winter. Here are some tips...

### #1 Dress for the weather.

- Wear layers (wear something waterproof for your top layer and remove inside layers first)
- Wear appropriate footwear for the weather and activity
- Remember your scarf, hat and mitts
- Wear sunscreen (Sunlight can reflect off the snow and cause a sunburn)
- Replace wet clothes with dry ones

If you feel comfortable you can focus on enjoying the beauty of winter.

**If you have fun  
you will be more likely  
to keep doing it.  
So get out there and enjoy  
our beautiful  
Canadian winters, eh!**

**#2 Spend time being active with family and friends.** You can create great memories for years to come. Here are some ideas:

### Try something different outdoors!

- Snow shoeing
- Skiing
- Winter walking
- Skating
- Winter camping
- Winter scavenger hunt
- Tobogganing/sledding
- Build a snow fort
- Play snow tag

### If you want to spend time inside try ...

- An exercise video
- Visiting an indoor driving range
- Going to an indoor pool (swimming, aqua aerobics)
- Indoor rock climbing



- Putting on some music and dancing
- Taking a class (Tai Chi, Karate, dance, yoga, pilates, fencing)

# The ABC's of Respiratory Outbreak Control

*Submitted by Bonnie Erwin, Public Health Nurse*

Now that the season of Influenza and other respiratory infections is upon us many people are inquiring "What is an Outbreak, how are they determined and who decides how they are handled?"

## What is an Outbreak?

Respiratory Outbreaks and Influenza may occur year round in Long-Term Care Facilities, but are more common from early fall to early spring. This year the influenza season arrived earlier than expected and is more widespread than in the past few years. Outbreaks may lead to substantial sickness & death. Occasionally two or more infectious agents are involved in a respiratory outbreak. Outbreak prevention, (i.e. Flu vaccine, handwashing) preparation AND early detection are vital to effective outbreak management.

The elderly in Long-Term Care Facilities often have chronic illnesses, which weaken their immune system, making them more vulnerable to respiratory infections. These viral infections may then lead to bacterial infections such as pneumonia.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has very clear guidelines on how to define a respiratory case, a potential outbreak and an outbreak.

The outbreak would be considered an influenza outbreak only if there is at least one laboratory confirmed case of influenza in the facility.

Recent headlines have been somewhat misleading. In any one institution there may be only 1 lab confirmed case – the person had a swab taken, which grew the flu virus, but there may be many more with influenza like illness or who have respiratory tract infections. Swabs are not taken on every sick person. It is important to remember that only bacterial infection can be treated with antibiotics. Antibiotics are not effective in treating viral infections.

## How is an outbreak handled?

Again very clear guidelines come from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. If the influenza virus is identified all residents will be treated with an antiviral medication which may help to prevent others from becoming ill or will lessen symptoms for a case.

The institution will also implement control measures in consultation with the Health Unit. These will include, use of gloves & masks when providing care to ill residents reinforcing hand washing precautions, keeping ill residents in their rooms and may include visiting restrictions.

## When is an outbreak over?

It depends on the cause of the illness. If influenza has been the culprit the outbreak will be declared "over" when 8 days have passed from the onset of symptoms of the last resident case. Eight days is the outer limit of communicability of influenza (5 days plus 3 days incubation).

You can do your part in helping to prevent Respiratory Outbreaks in Long-Term care Institutions by getting your flu shot, not visiting if you have experienced respiratory symptoms in the previous 5 days and frequent hand washing.

For more information you may visit the Health Unit web site at [www.healthunit.org](http://www.healthunit.org)

## Eat Well, Play Well

*Submitted by Heather Deegan, Registered Dietitian/Public Health Nutritionist*

March is Nutrition Month and the theme this year targets children in their school age years. The campaign logo “Eat Well, Play Well” reinforces the notion that children who make healthy food choices have the nutrients and energy needed to grow, play and learn. There are many things we can do to support children in making healthy choices.

### Create Classrooms that Support Healthy Eating

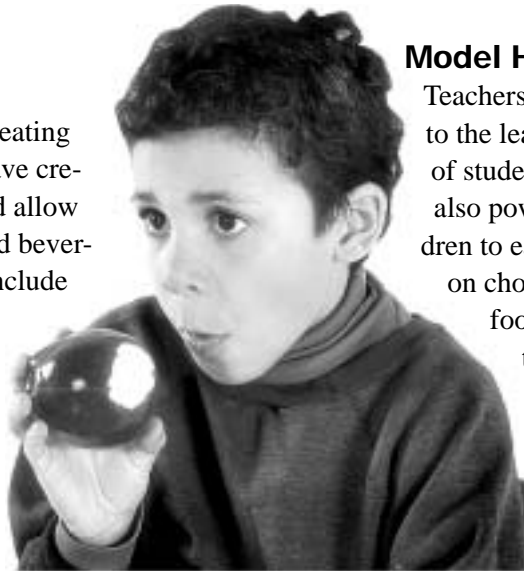
What can you do to facilitate healthy eating in your classroom? Some teachers have created “Healthy Snack Classrooms” and allow children to snack on healthy foods and beverages during class time. Snacks that include foods from Canada’s Food Guide to Healthy Eating, and water, are permitted, whereas higher-fat snacks like potato chips, sugary drinks like soft drinks and fruit punch, and candy are saved and eaten outside of class time or at home. Perhaps you can establish a “Healthy Snack Classroom” for your students during Nutrition Month.

### Healthy Choices in the School

What is your school doing to support students in making healthy food and beverage choices? Many schools have food available at special events. Are healthy choices offered at your school’s special events? It’s easy to arrange a fruit, vegetable or cheese tray in addition to (or instead of) cookies and squares. Some schools have

tuck shops and/or vending machines. Are there healthy choices like water, milk and 100% pure fruit juice available at reasonable prices? It is important to enable healthy choices in the school environment. Encourage children to speak up and ask for healthy food choices in vending machines, tuck shops and at special events.

Involve your student leaders.



### Model Healthy Behaviours

Teachers make an important contribution to the learning and behaviour development of students in the classroom. Teachers are also powerful role models. Teach children to eat well by your example. Focus on choosing healthy foods from the four food groups in Canada’s Food Guide to Healthy Eating. Select “Other” foods such as soft drinks, candy and higher-fat snacks less often. Share with children some of the more adventurous eating experiences you have had. Focus on unusual food combinations, foods that are prepared in uncommon ways, and foods from other cultures. Perhaps you can have a food adventure in the classroom and get students involved in preparing a meal or snack from another culture.

If you would like more ideas that enable healthy food choices in your classroom or your school, contact a Registered Dietitian at the Health Unit.

## TOBACCO - It Remains An Issue!

*Submitted by Kim MacInnis, Public Health Nurse*

Canadians have come a long way to reduce smoking rates but there is still a need to continue addressing tobacco in school age kids. During the 1980's, the proportion of 15-19 year olds who smoked regularly dropped from 43% to 23%. The mid 1990's saw smoking rates in teens rise. More than a quarter of Canadian teens were smoking, with young women smoking more than men-30% versus 27%.<sup>1</sup>



### Current Stats

In 2002, 22% of teens reported themselves as current smokers-23% girls, 21% boys. The 20-24 age group reported a 31% smoking rate.<sup>2</sup>

### Some Sobering Facts

- The younger people begin to smoke, the more strongly they become addicted to nicotine.
- Canadian teens smoke more than 1.7 billion cigarettes each day resulting in \$330 million dollars.
- Over 90% of teens who smoke as few as 3-4 cigarettes a day are trapped into a career of regular smoking which typically lasts 30-40 years.
- Among children as young as 6-12 years, 7% have already tried cigarettes.
- 26% of young women who smoke began before the age of 13! 83% before age 16 and almost all before age 18.<sup>3</sup>

Young people may begin to think about smoking as a way to appear more mature, to cope with stress, to bond with a group of peers or display independence from family. Positive role modeling and education regarding tobacco issues remains an important aspect of prevention.<sup>4</sup> Health Canada has developed a new program titled 'Science, Tobacco and You' that will assist teachers in teaching students about tobacco and its negative effects on the human body. The program contains a CD ROM, resource guide and many fun assignments. This program would be ideal for use in health, science and drama classes for grades 4-6. All schools in Ontario received a copy of this but if you wish to order another one contact Health Canada at 1-800-267-1245, [www.hc-sc.gc.ca/](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/). Lungs are For Life is the Lung Association's free school program for smoking prevention. The programs offer interactive, educational materials for students from k-12. These instructional packages can be ordered by contacting the Health unit at 1-800-660-5853 or the Lung Association directly at 1-888-566-5864. Not only will these resources cover the required school curriculum but they can be helpful in combating the ever present problem of youth tobacco use!

#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Health Canada website

<sup>2</sup> CTUMS-Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring System, website

<sup>3</sup> Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada-ww2.heartandstroke.on.ca

<sup>4</sup> Canadian Social Trends-Winter 1996, Statistics Canada.

## School Zone, No Smoke Zone.

*Submitted by Piotr Oglaza, Public Health Inspector*

<p><i>Pour votre sante...</i></p> <p><b>Il est interdit de fumer dans l'école et sur son terrain.</b></p>		<p><i>For your health...</i></p> <p><b>School buildings &amp; property are smoke-free</b></p>
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Tobacco use has been deemed as the most significant contributor to adverse health outcomes in the population of Canadians. Therefore enforcement of the Tobacco Control Act (TCA) is one of the most important goals of the tobacco strategy for the Health Unit.

Section 9. (1)(3) of the Tobacco Control Act (1994) of Ontario, states that *"No person shall smoke tobacco or hold lighted tobacco in ... a school as defined in the Education Act."*

According to The Education Act (1990) of Ontario, a school includes both the building and school grounds. Therefore, smoking in a car parked on school property is also illegal.

Enforcement at schools can take the following form:

1. On the first offence, students in Grade 9 only, observed by school staff will receive in-house discipline, for example, suspension or detention, letter to parents.
2. All other infractions to be reported by fax to the

tobacco enforcement officer who will proceed by charging under Section 9. (1). The incident report must contain information regarding the date and time of the offence, the name, address, phone and names of the parents of the student. The name of the person witnessing the infraction of smoking or holding lighted tobacco must be included. A witness may need to appear in court.

Please note that "no person" as stated in Section 9. (1) of the TCA refers not only to students but also staff, parents and visitors. The incident report can be submitted by anybody who witnessed the infraction.

Tobacco Enforcement Officers may meet with Principals/Vice Principals to review smoking on school property. There will be surveillance to ensure compliance with the Act.

For additional information and assistance call the Health Unit at (613) 345 5685 or (613) 283 2740.

## Dental Screening..... and More

*Submitted by Penny White, Registered Dental Hygienist*

Dental screening has become as routine a procedure in the elementary schools as immunization. But have you ever wondered how we determine which children should be screened; who does the screening; and why we want them regardless of their family's ability to maintain regular dental visits?

The children ask those questions of us every day.

We are Registered Dental Hygienists and Certified Dental Assistants. Although we work closely with our Public Health Nurse colleagues in planning programs and services, we are not nurses.

### April is Dental Health Month, and "2 for 2 is what you do".

*Submitted by Leslie Redmond, Registered Dental Hygienist*

April is Dental Health Month and to help celebrate the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit will once again participate in the "2 for 2 is what you do" Dental Health Awareness Campaign, which was launched province wide in April 2003.

Promoted by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Ontario Association of Public Health Dentistry, grade 2 students in selected schools in the tri-county area will be visited by the Health Unit Dental Hygienists and Dental Assistants during the month of April 2004.

The message is the same: "brush your teeth twice a day for at least two minutes each time". Students will participate in a fun and exciting lesson to promote the toothbrush message. Students will also receive hand-outs to reinforce the message at home.

For more information on this program or other dental information please contact your local Health Unit office.



Aside from screening for dental decay, infection and trauma, Dental Hygienists look for crowding and malocclusions (misaligned teeth), signs of gingivitis and periodontal disease, and make recommendations for preventive care including fluoride treatments and pit and fissure sealants.

The Dental Assistants prepare everything that is required for an efficient smooth process both prior to and during the screening as well as recording all of the detailed information and data.

The dental assessment, or screening, is a noninvasive procedure and each child is assessed with a clean sterilized dental mouth mirror. This procedure does not require a medical history or pre medication. We use a non-touch technique with non-latex gloves and only the mouth mirror comes in contact with the child's mouth and oral tissues.

We also provide information on the Children In Need Of Treatment Program (CINOT), to parents who are experiencing financial hardships and whose children qualify as requiring essential dental care.

Our mandate also requires that we ensure that those children in need of urgent care, receive dental treatment. From time to time this may necessitate several visits to the school to provide follow-up screenings for some children.

Our mandate also requires that we provide statistical data to the Ministry of Health on a yearly basis. Dental indices surveys are conducted every year with all 5 year olds and various other grades and ages which are determined at the beginning of each school year. This anonymous data provides a local picture of the dental needs of children in our three counties and, combined with other Health Unit areas, shows provincial and national trends in dental disease.

So, if you wonder why during the dental screening, we are speaking an unrecognizable language, spewing out numbers and filling out a multitude of forms, you'll know, we are providing dental screening ... and more.