



Health Matters

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

SPRING 2006

<http://www.healthunit.org>

TV Turn-off Challenge Screen Free Week 2006—an important time to re-evaluate how we spend our leisure time.

Submitted by Melanie Ramsey, RN, BScN,

WHAT'S INSIDE

Think Before You	
Chew! Smokeless Tobacco	2
Drop the Pop!	2
Renovation Safety	3
Folic Acid in Curriculum	4

It is not easy to go screen free for a week especially considering that on average, children over the age of two spend 21 hours a week in front of the television, not including computer and video game time (Statistics Canada 2002). Also, there is a direct link between the amount of television children watch, and their likely hood of eating unhealthy foods, largely as a result of commercials for fatty, salty, sugary foods targeting children. (Teras et al, Journal of Development and Behavioural Pediatrics, 1989) Taking the challenge to go screen free for a week is a special time to take stock of how we spend our free time and try to make physical activity and healthy eating a priority in everyday life.

This year 24 different schools participated in the challenge from all over our Tri County, along with workplaces, families, and individuals. The Upper Canada District School Board was very supportive, even promoting the week on their website. A big congratulations goes out to everyone who participated!!

Helpful tips to decrease screen time throughout the year:

Keep the TV off during dinner. Research suggests that families who have the TV off at mealtime have healthier eating habits than those who do not. (Coon et al, Pediatrics, 2001)

Remove the TV set from children's bedrooms. Studies indicate that if there is TV in a child's bedroom, the risk of being obese is increased by 31%. (Dennison et al, Pediatrics, 2002)

Place clear limits on television viewing. Allow 30 minutes each day or 1 hour every other day. Try being positive, instead of saying "you can't watch TV" say, "Let's turn off the TV so we can..."

Replace TV watching with something more active. Look for fun activities in your community.

Move the television set to a less visible, hard to reach location in the home.

- Be a positive role model. Parents can be physically active and cut down on screen time themselves. Children copy their parents, so here is a chance to show them some positive habits.
- Avoid using the TV as a reward or a punishment. This gives the TV more power.

- Involve children in household activities and meal preparation.

- Cancel your cable or satellite subscription and use this money to pay for fun activities.

Resources with helpful tips on going screen free are available on the Health Unit's website at www.healthunit.org

For more information on increasing physical activity and healthy eating call 1-800-660-5853 or email us at www.healthunit.org

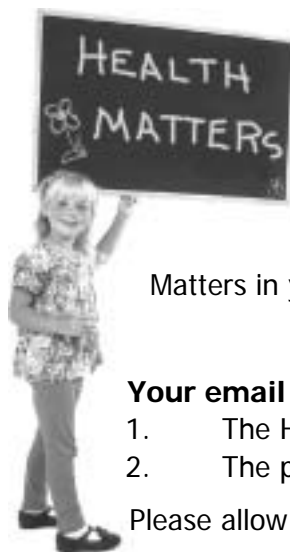
Health Matters * NEW SERVICE * To help schools with parent newsletters.

Would you like to use articles you find in Health Matters in your parent/school newsletters? If so please contact: schoolhealth@healthunit.org

Your email request must include:

1. The Health Matters edition (example: Fall 2005)
2. The page number and title of the article.

Please allow 48 hours for an electronic delivery!



Dental Health Matters!

Submitted by: Lainie Taylor, CDA, Certified Dental Assistant

THINK BEFORE YOU CHEW!

Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District Health Unit Dental Team targets Smokeless Tobacco use in High Schools for their Oral Health Month Campaign

Certified Dental Assistants from the Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District Health Unit provided a presentation to high school students at Almonte District High School on the dangers and risks of "Smokeless Tobacco" use, as part of a new Oral Health Month initiative.

Smokeless tobacco, also known as "spit tobacco", "dip" or "chew" is harmful and highly addictive and may lead to oral cancer. The amount of nicotine in "dip" or "chew" can be 1 to 5 times the amount found in one cigarette. Spit tobacco contains over 28 known cancer-causing agents. Here are just a few: Formaldehyde (embalming fluid), Cyanide (gas chamber chemical), Arsenic (rat poisoning), Polonium-210 (nuclear waste).

The presentation included a video based on the true story of Gruen Von Behrens, a young man who began using "spit tobacco" at the age of 13yrs. By age 17, he had been diagnosed with oral cancer. Since then, he's had almost 30 disfiguring surgeries to save his life, including one surgery that removed half his neck muscles, lymph nodes, and half his tongue.

After viewing the video, students attended an interactive information display. The display included information on smokeless tobacco as well as the consequences of using it. Students also participated in an interactive "game" to test their knowledge of this topic. Handouts were also available for students to take home, including a "tin" of sugar free mints. The tin was designed to look like a tin of "chew" or "spit tobacco". The message on the tin was "Smokeless Tobacco" "Think before you Chew".

Many students commented they found the session very informative and thought provoking, and felt the video had an impact on them. Many said they had tried "smokeless tobacco" and now after having seen the consequences of using this harmful substance, would choose not to continue using the product.

Some students and adults we spoke with that day advised they knew very little about this subject, with some not even knowing it existed. We do know that some students are using this product in the high schools and it is our goal to bring this presentation to all of the high schools in our area in the near future.

For more information on the dangers and risks of "smokeless tobacco" call Dental Services at the Health Unit.



Drop the Pop!

Pick Up Juice

Choose 100% fruit juice or 100% fruit juice from concentrate. Juices contain natural sugar, so drink it in moderation. Limit juice to 1 to 2 servings per day (1 serving = 1 cup). Beware! Fruit "drinks", "beverages", "cocktails", "punches" and sport drinks are mostly sugar.



Pick Up Water

Choose tap or bottled water. Almost 70% of our body is water. Your body needs water all the time, not just when you are thirsty.

Pick Up Milk

Choose 2% or 1%, white or chocolate milk. Aim for 2 to 4 cup servings per day. (1 serving = 1 cup). Milk helps to build strong bones and teeth. This is especially important for children and teenagers.



SHOCKING FACTS

- Excess sugar consumption in children may cause cavities and contribute to obesity.
- Diet pop is not a healthier alternative to regular pop. Diet pop has no vitamins or minerals and it contains acid which is known to be harmful to teeth.
- You are the most important role model for your child. If you drink healthy drinks, your child will be more likely to drink these as well.

Don't be fooled, read the label and make your choices count. Drop the Pop! and choose water, milk or 100% juice.

Did you know that there is...

- 9-12 teaspoons of sugar in one can of pop?
- 12 teaspoons of sugar in one can of "fruit drink"?
- 15 teaspoons of sugar in bottled milkshakes?



Consider safer renovating practices

Submitted by Erin McLean, RN, BNSc Public Health Nurse Program Leader for Child Health

Spring is here, renovations are in the air!

Why worry about toxins while renovating?

When you renovate, particles are disturbed and moved into the air and on surfaces all over the home. Children and pregnant women are most vulnerable to toxins. The rapid growth and development that is happening in their bodies can be affected by exposure to harmful substances such as lead, arsenic, asbestos and even mildews and moulds.

The Canadian Partnership for Children's Health and the Environment states "Lead in paint is not "yesterday's problem." It remains a potentially dangerous source of lead in any home built before 1978 (when the first steps were taken in Canada to regulate the lead content of paint used on indoor surfaces)." Exposure to even very low levels of lead can cause learning disabilities and other harmful effects on children's development.

Asbestos fibres get stuck in the lungs, causing scarring. This can lead to severely impaired lung function (asbestosis) and cancers of the lungs. Asbestos can be found in older building materials:

- Asbestos insulation around a hot water tank
- Loose-fill vermiculite insulation
- Vinyl asbestos floor tiles
- Roofing shingles and siding
- Acoustical ceilings tiles

The three main sources of lead exposure in housing come from:

- **Water:** lead solder in plumbing, lead service connections that link the house to the main water supply, or lead pipes in the home
- **Soil:** due to leaded gasoline, urban soils, especially near major highways, may have higher lead levels than rural areas
- **Paint/paint dust:** until the late 1970s, lead was added in significant quantities to household and industrial paints

What should I look for when renovating?

There is a lot of information available to use to assess your home's current condition. Older homes tend to have more risks related to lead and asbestos. Newer homes may have furnishings and carpets with volatile organic compounds. Before you purchase new building supplies, consider the long-term environmental exposure to your family.

How do I dispose of the old building materials?

Municipalities have hazardous waste disposal sites available for their residents. Old paint cans, cleaning products and painted wood need careful disposal. Contact your local municipality for their sites and dates for hazardous waste disposal.

Reliable information is available from:

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
Environmental Choice Program
Children's Environmental Health Network
Health Canada
Canadian Partnership for Children's health and Environment

Visit the Health Unit's website for links to these resources.



Folic Acid for Curriculum based lesson planning

Submitted by Krystal Taylor, BSc, RD, Public Health Dietitian

If you teach **Science, Social Science and Humanities** or **Health and Physical Education** courses, you need to know about folic acid.

Folic acid, or folate, is an essential B vitamin required in the production of new cells. It is especially critical during periods of rapid tissue growth such as pregnancy.

A woman can ensure she is getting enough folic acid by:

- Taking a multivitamin containing 0.4 mg of folic acid everyday
- Eating foods high in folate such as broccoli, spinach and orange juice everyday
- Eating foods fortified with folic acid such as breakfast cereals, enriched pasta and bread everyday

How to include folic acid teaching in your classroom

- When discussing **food fortification**, highlight prevention of NTDs (Neural Tube Defects) as the reason for mandatory fortification of folic acid to white wheat flour, enriched pasta and enriched cornmeal. Prevalence rates of NTDs in Canada have decreased 38% following mandatory fortification in 1998. Inform your students of Health Canada's recommendation for folic acid supplementation in addition to eating fortified and folate-rich foods.
- When discussing **reproduction**, highlight the role of folic acid in early fetal development. Discuss the benefits of folic acid supplementation and a healthy diet prior to conception to prevent NTDs.
- When discussing **healthy growth and sexuality**, recommend that all women who could become pregnant (even if she is using birth control) take a multivitamin containing 0.4 mg of folic acid everyday.
- When discussing **healthy eating**, highlight food sources of folic acid and the benefits of folic acid supplementation prior to conception.
- When discussing the **metabolic process** and chemical structure of folic acid, take an extra minute to inform your students of the importance of folic acid in neonatal development. Highlight the importance of folic acid supplementation prior to conception.
- When discussing **child development from conception to three years of age**, highlight the role of folic acid in early fetal development. Discuss the benefits of folic acid supplementation and a diet rich in folate to prevent NTDs. Also discuss some of the developmental effects of NTDs.

Supplementing a folate rich diet with 0.4 mg of folic acid **before conception** has been shown to reduce the incidence of **neural tube defects** (NTD) by as much as 70%.

NTDs are birth defects that occur when the neural tube fails to close properly during the first four weeks of pregnancy, resulting in abnormalities of the spine, brain or skull.

Spina bifida is the most common NTD.

Almost half of all Canadian pregnancies are not planned.

All women who could become pregnant should **take a multivitamin containing 0.4 mg of folic acid** everyday.

Daily folic acid supplementation should **begin at least 2-3 months before pregnancy** and continue during the first trimester.

Sources:

Public Health Agency of Canada. [Preconception Health – Folic Acid for the Primary Prevention of Neural Tube Defects. A Resource Document for Health Professionals, 2002.](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/fa-af/) Available at <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/fa-af/>. Accessed March 17, 2006.

Folic Acid Alliance Ontario. [Folic Acid: It's Never Too Early. Folic Acid Awareness Community Action Guide 2002.](http://www.folicacid.ca) Available at <http://www.folicacid.ca>. Accessed March 17, 2006.

For more information about folic acid and free student resources, contact 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 Public Health Nurse or a Registered Dietitian.