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Almonte, Ontario
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(613) 256-1203

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Brockville, Ontario
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(613) 345-5685

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2685 Concession Rd
Kemptville, Ontario
K0G 1J0
(613) 258-5941

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52 Abbott Street
North, Unit 2
Smiths Falls, Ontario
K7A 1W3
(613) 283-2740

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839 Stone St. N.
Unit #3
North Gate Plaza
Gananoque, Ontario
K7G 1Z7
(613) 382-4231

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1-800-660-5853

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Health Briefs

Information on a healthy workplace

Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit • Spring 2002

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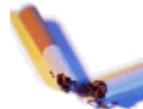
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DEAR DORA

Submitted by Erin McLean, Public Health Nurse

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ALLERGIES/ANAPHYLAXIS

Submitted by Helen Lyng, Public Health Nurse

The body's immune system usually recognizes and eliminates foreign substance (antigens) by producing proteins called antibodies. Then the antibodies bind with the antigen, the allergic reaction is neutralized.

In repeat exposure of the antigens the body may overreact, causing an anaphylactic reaction.

Some signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis include hives, swelling, difficulty swallowing, difficulty breathing, hypo-tension, nausea and vomiting.

Sources that may cause anaphylactic reaction – peanuts, nuts, insect stings, shellfish, chocolate, eggs, MSG, and penicillin.

How to correct the problems:

- Awareness of contact with allergen
- Avoidance of allergen, no sharing, extra precautions for field trips, picnics and barbecues
- Action (what to do if there is a anaphylactic reaction)
 - Carry an epipen (adrenaline)
 - Inform workplace of emergency plan
 - Go to the hospital

Contact the Health Unit for more information.



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DRIVER FATIGUE

Submitted by Rebecca Kavanagh, Public Health Nurse



Has this ever been you?

Driving down an open road, calmed by the tranquil landscape surrounding you. The interior of the car is warm and comfortable. The radio is playing soft music. You're becoming very tired. Your eyes are gazing straight ahead to what seems like a never-ending road. You feel your body beginning to sag as your eyelids become very heavy. Suddenly, your tires hit the gravel and produce a frightening sound. You sit up straight with your eyes wide open. As your heart continues to pound in your chest, you are forced to admit that you, a very careful driver, fell asleep...

More and more of us are sitting behind the wheel, when we should be in bed. Driving fatigue is a killer. In fact in 1996, fatigue was the cause of 20 fatal crashes in Ontario alone (Ministry of Transportation, www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/safety/facts/). It slows your reaction time, decreases your awareness, and impairs your judgment. The consequences could be fatal. Here are some tips that may help you avoid falling asleep at the wheel:

- Get enough sleep before a trip
- Drive with a companion and switch driving when necessary
- Avoid driving during the peak drowsy times (2 p.m. to 5 p.m. & 10 p.m. to 6 a.m.)
- Keep the temperature cool
- Turn the radio volume up, and switch stations frequently, but avoid soft, sleep-inducing music
- Keep your body involved with driving (Do not use cruise control)
- Take frequent breaks - At least every 2 hours
- Avoid alcohol and heavy food
- Beware of medications that can impair your driving ability
- Caffeine-type drinks like coffee and cola may provide a short-term boost
- See your doctor if you are prone to constant sleepiness

If anti-fatigue measures fail and you start noticing the danger signs of fatigue, there is only one solution. SLEEP! If no rest areas are in sight, pull off the road in a safe area which is well-lit and take a nap. Even 20 minutes of sleep might refresh you enough to keep going until you reach a safe rest area. (Tips from the Ministry of Transportation of Ontario and the National Safety Council)

Remember, driving a vehicle deserves your fullest attention. Your life may depend on it.

Sweet dreams!

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THERE ISN'T A PROBLEM HERE WITH FETAL ALCOHOL SYNDROME ... IS THERE?

Submitted by Barb Guthrie, Public Health Nurse



Women don't drink during pregnancy these days, or at least not much... do they?

It may seem that everyone now understands the dangers of alcohol in pregnancy and that drinking during pregnancy is no longer a problem. However, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) is an issue in most communities. Alcohol is a part of our lifestyle and there are many reasons why its use may continue during pregnancy:

- Some women may drink before knowing that they are pregnant.
- Some may not know it is harmful.
- Some drink because of life's problems.
- Some drink because it is part of their social life.

Alcohol during pregnancy can permanently damage the brain and central nervous system of a developing baby. The extent of damage varies with the amount of alcohol consumed, the frequency of drinking and the stage of development of the baby. There are no known safe limits or safe times for drinking in pregnancy. The more alcohol consumed, the greater the risk of harm.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) is the combination of effects on a baby from exposure to alcohol in the womb. FAS can include facial irregularities, small head, low birth weight, and developmental delays. These effects may be overlooked but as the child develops there are usually behaviour problems as well. FAS children usually have difficulties at home, in school, in the workforce, and later on may have trouble with the law.

The Health Unit, The Upper Canada Board of Education and other agencies in Leeds, Grenville and Lanark are joining together to plan:

- How to prevent FAS in our community
- How to help families who are affected by FAS and
- How to acquire resources for physicians, teachers, employers, the police and others who work with FAS affected families

If you would like to be involved in developing a community wide FAS campaign, call Barb Guthrie or Rebecca Kavanagh at the Health Unit, 613-283-2740.

Email: barb.guthrie@healthunit.org or rebecca.kavanagh@healthunit.org
For concerns about alcohol in pregnancy call the MOTHERISK ALCOHOL AND SUBSTANCE USE HELPLINE at 1-877-FAS-INFO. (1-877-327-4636).
Or go to the MOTHERISK web site, www.motherisk.org

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GUM DISEASE COULD MAKE YOU SICK

Submitted by Penny White, Registered Dental Hygienist



We all know that regular dental visits are important to maintain the health of our teeth and gums.

Did you know that periodontal (gum and bone) disease might be a risk factor for other health conditions?

Recent studies have linked the bacteria found in diseased gum tissues to:

- Heart disease and stroke
- Pneumonia and other respiratory diseases
- Diabetes
- Premature, low birth weight deliveries

People with gum disease are more likely to injure their gum tissue by chewing or brushing their teeth. Bacteria from the diseased tissues enter the blood stream traveling to other parts of the body causing or contributing to existing health problems.

It is estimated that 75 per cent of adults over the age of 30 suffer from some degree of gum disease.

The bacteria in plaque causes inflammation of the gum tissues (gingivitis) and if left untreated, can lead to destruction of the bone that supports the teeth.

The best prevention is regular visits to your dentist or dental hygienist for an assessment of your current oral health condition. Your dental hygienist will remove any accumulation of hard deposits caused by plaque; provide instructions and recommendations for proper daily care.

For more information on this or other dental topics, contact the Dental Program of the Health Promotion and Chronic Disease Prevention Program of the Leeds Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit.

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POOL SAFETY TIPS

PART ONE – POOL SAFETY

Submitted by Rebecca Kavanagh, Public Health Nurse

Swimming is a great way to keep cool and have fun, but statistics tell us that it can also be dangerous. You can help keep yourself and your family safe by following these simple guidelines:

- Never leave a child alone near water.
- Designate a pool Guard.
- Teach kids basic water safety rules.
- Always keep basic lifesaving equipment near by and make sure you are trained in the use of this equipment.
- Learn to swim and never swim alone.
- Learn CPR and First Aid.
- Never swim under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.
- Keep a phone near by with emergency numbers.
- Enclose the pool with a four-sided, self-closing and self-locking fence that is at least 4 feet high. Most children who drown in backyard pools gain access from the house.
- Make a safety check of water hazards in your neighbourhood.
- Put pool toys away when finished with them.
- Make sure pool cover is completely off before swimming.

8% of Canadians will die and many more will be seen in emergency rooms each year because of pool related injuries. (Canadian Red Cross, 2002).

“Make sure your family is Water Smart before they get in too deep.”
Contact the Canadian Red Cross at 1-888-890-1997 for more information.

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P L SAFETY TIPS

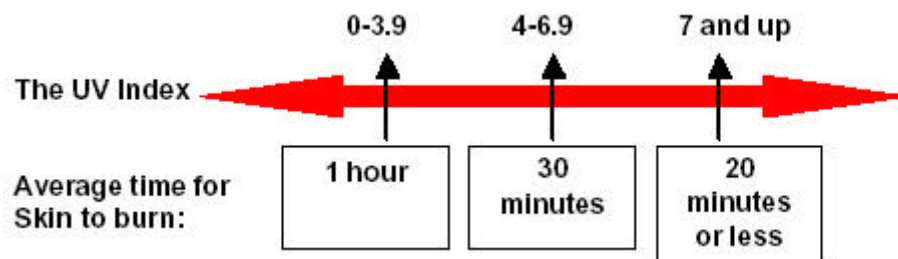
PART TWO – SUN SAFETY

Submitted by Susan LaBrie, Public Health Nurse

Water can reflect 80-100% of the sun's UV rays, greatly increasing the risk of skin damage and sunburn. Know how to protect your skin...

- Avoid the sun between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m., when the sun's UV rays are the strongest.
- Seek shade whenever possible and wear clothing to cover your arms and legs.
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat that covers your head, face, ears and neck.
- Slop on a 'broad-spectrum' sunscreen that protects against UVA and UVB rays and has an SPF of 15 or higher. Reapply to dry skin every 2 hours and after swimming or sweating.
- Wear sunglasses with UV protection to protect your eyes from the sun.
- Keep babies under one year out of direct sunlight.
- Beware of clouds – You can still get a sunburn on a cloudy day!
- Learn about the UV index and use it to protect your skin accordingly by following the safety tips listed above.

Just one blistering sunburn before the age of 18 can double your risk for skin cancer in the future!



Watch out! Avoid being in the sun during peak hours: 11 a.m. – 4 p.m. High Risk for burns. Enjoy the outdoors, but be sure to protect your skin. Damage can still happen with a low UV index.

To learn more about water safety or sun safety, contact the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit at 1-800-660-5853 or check out our website at www.healthunit.org.

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SMOKING IN THE WORKPLACE: A COSTLY BUSINESS

Submitted by Tania O'Connor, Public Health Nurse



Despite all of the research available on the harmful effects of second-hand smoke, many workplaces continue to allow smoking in offices, lunchrooms, cafeterias and work-stations. This means non-smoking employees are exposed to the harmful effects of second-hand smoke. Smoking employees are also exposed to the second-hand smoke of other smokers. An eight-hour day of exposure to second-hand smoke is equivalent to smoking 2 or 3 cigarettes. Harmful particles from burning cigarettes stay in the air even after the smoke can no longer be seen or smelled.

Smoking employees cost workplaces a great deal of money in sick time and in lost productivity. A report by the Canadian Conferences Board, 1997 found that for each smoking employee in the workplace the average yearly cost to the employer included:

- \$230 due to increased absenteeism with an average 15% more sick time taken by smokers than non-smokers.
- \$2,175 from decreased productivity due to an average of 30 minutes daily taken for smoking during non-designated breaks.
- \$75 in increased life insurance premiums.
- \$85 for construction, operation and cleaning of a smoking area on the workplace premises.

While smoking is a health hazard it is also very costly to business. Research shows that when workers are in a supportive environment it is easier for them to quit smoking and remain smoke-free. An increase in the number of employees quitting smoking would result in the improved health of workers and would significantly reduce costs that businesses must put forward in order to care for their smoking employees. A variety of smoking cessation programs are available including the Canadian Cancer Society's Self-Help programs. Cessation programs can be run over lunch hours. Occupational Health Nurses can assist with counselling and program implementation. Pay stubs and newsletters can be used to share information. Implementing a smoke-free workplace policy that bans all smoking in the workplace is a step that more and more companies are taking. This type of policy cuts out the harmful effects of second-hand smoke and also supports smokers who are trying to quit by not providing them the opportunity to smoke while they are working.

The Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit has many programs and trained staff to assist workplaces in improving the health of their employees. For more information please call 1-800-660-5853.

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GET OUT AND ENJOY THE TRAILS

Submitted by Tania O'Connor, Tri-Health Coordinator



The Tri-Health Team would like to remind you of the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark trail guide. This guide features 15 beautiful trails which offer easily accessible walking, hiking, cycling, roller-blading, canoeing/kayaking, skiing and snowshoeing routes.

Hugh Taylor, age 81 and Pat Taylor, age 74 enjoy walking as a form of physical activity. They are also the original members of the Kemptville walking group that was organized in the fall of 1996. Presently the walking group has 42 members of all ages.

Participating in a walking group has provided Hugh and Pat with a good incentive to get out and start walking. The Kemptville walking group divides their walks between the Kemptville College Barr Arena and the Howard Ferguson Forestry Centre. Hugh reports that the forestry trails in the north end of Kemptville are very convenient to access. The walking paths offer nature enthusiasts a variety of tree species from hardwood maples, beech, and oak to coniferous pines, cedars, and spruce. These trails also provide a natural habitat for a number of small wildlife and bird species. Hugh states that *"It is great to see the Howard Ferguson Forestry trails included in the Tri-Trails Map. It is a wonderful resource for our community."*

To help YOU get into the habit of walking, check out—"Walk This Way - A Guide to Stick to It!" - a self help kit for men and women ages 20 to 64 years. The kit includes a booklet with ideas on how to include walking in your day, stretches, tips on clothing and safety, as well as an erasable laminated board for planning and recording your weeks.

Walking is one of the greatest activities to get you started on the road to physical activity. Start a walking group in your workplace! Post a sign in a common area and invite your colleagues to a lunch hour walk. Record how far you have walked on the Walk This Way! memo board- this will motivate others to join. So what are you waiting for? Now is a perfect time to pick up a Leeds, Grenville and Lanark Trail Guide and Walk This Way! Please call 1-800-660-5853 and ask to speak to the Tri-Health co-ordinator to find out where to get your walking resources.



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BEWARE OF DIET FRAUD

Submitted by Heather Deegan, Registered Dietitian/Public Health Nutritionist



The claims made by diet companies and people who have had "success" using their products often sound too good to be true.

The Cardinal Rule

If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. If you read about a diet program or weight loss product and find you are asking yourself "Wow, is this for real?", chances are, it probably is not for real. The bottom line is, diet companies are often more interested in making money than they are in your health. The most important thing to remember is: There is no "magic bullet" to better health.

Who Is Credible?

Some diet plans are created by doctors, nutritionists and people with all kinds of letters behind their name. To help you sort it out, ask yourself the following questions to avoid getting scammed by bogus diet programs:

1. Why do you want to lose weight?

If you are trying to improve your health, weight loss may not be the answer. It may be necessary to increase your physical activity, improve your eating habits and/or manage the stress in your life. Weight loss may or may not result, but by making these changes, you will definitely be healthier.

2. Are you being advised to eliminate a food group, buy a product, or use supplements to replace nutrients?

If you answer "yes" to any of these questions, you are likely being sold a program or product that is not based on balanced, healthy eating. Using Canada's Food Guide to help plan your meals, and including foods from all of the four food groups is the best way to ensure you are getting all of the nutrients you need each day.

3. Can you live with these changes for the rest of your life?

If you are following a program or diet that is short term, is there a maintenance plan set up for when the program ends? If all of your favourite foods are "forbidden", can you live without them forever? Healthy eating enables you to include a good balance of all foods. Changes that support health should be easy to do on a regular basis and continue for the rest of your life.

Perhaps it is time to challenge yourself to abandon "dieting" and focus instead on small day-to-day changes you can make to improve your health over the long term. View it as an investment in yourself. Many people spend time and energy to plan their financial future and their financial security over the long term. Why not look at your health the same way? Some time and effort now will go a long way in maintaining your health and preventing long-term disease.

- If you would like more information on improving your health, please contact the Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District Health Unit's Health Action Line at 1-800-660-5853 (345-5685) and ask to speak with a Registered Dietitian.

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DEAR DORA

Submitted by Erin McLean, Public Health Nurse

I am the mother of a 5 year old boy. My son is a very busy and active little boy, but does not want to eat! He will only eat certain things, like peanut butter sandwiches and crackers and cheese. This has been going on for a few weeks. Before that he would only eat cereal and fruit juice. If he does not eat the meal, we make him whatever he wants – he has to eat something! Help!

Signed:

Mystified Mommy

Dear Mommy:

It sounds like you have a normal child who is behaving the way that other children do around food and mealtime. Parents and children both have different responsibilities around food and eating. Your responsibility as a parent is to choose and offer nutritious foods to your child that are safe for him to eat, and to provide structure around meal and snack times. However, it is your child's responsibility of how much to eat, how often to eat, and even whether to eat at all. Let me explain.

Your child was born with an internal regulator for energy. He will eat, fill up, and stop eating in response to his internal hunger. A child will not voluntarily starve himself – he will eat when he is hungry. He will even make up for mistakes – eating more on one day and less the next, choosing a variety of foods over time. When parents try to control their children's eating, either by forcing the child to eat certain foods or by withholding foods until the child eats what the parent wants them to, this takes away the child's own control over his appetite and eating.

It is not important what your child eats at one particular meal. It is important what eating habits your child develops as he grows. Children who have "food jags", such as only eating peanut butter sandwiches and crackers and cheese, will eventually grow out of them. At mealtime, offer something from each of the four food groups in Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating: Grain Products, Vegetables & Fruit, Milk Products, and Meat & Alternatives. It may take 10, 20, 30 exposures or more to the new food before he will eat it. Offering something once is not enough.

Another key point is that children 'fill up' quickly. Try offering small amounts of liquids {milk, juice or water} with food, or offering liquids after the 'food' part of the meal.

You need to let your child have some responsibility for his own eating. Over time, his nutrition will work itself out if he is allowed to have control over his own eating and his own hunger.

*Information adapted from Secrets of Feeding a Healthy Family,
Ellyn Satter, 1999.*