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Health Briefs

Information for a healthy workplace

Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit - Winter 2003

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Have a Holly, Jolly Christmas ... But be careful when you drink!

Submitted by Denise Kall, Public Health Nurse

It's that time of year again, when the 'normal' busy routine becomes extra busy with holiday shopping, wrapping, baking, and socializing. Alcohol almost always plays a big role in our holiday traditions and celebrations. Over the last decade, we have come to expect the standard holiday RIDE programs that clamp down on drivers who drink. Many of us have changed our celebrations to have a designated driver, to take a cab, or to stay overnight.

In more recent years, we have seen lawsuits against party hosts who have been liable for their guests' behaviour until they sober up. Slowly, we are learning that we should always serve food along with the alcohol, that we should offer non-alcoholic choices for our guests, and that we should take the car keys from someone we know has consumed too much liquor.

More and more people are also becoming aware that pregnant women should not drink alcohol. This is necessary in order to prevent Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), a birth defect that causes brain damage to the developing baby. While we once thought that Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (now also referred to as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)) was something that only happened to women who were alcoholics, we now know that children can be born with symptoms of FASD to women who considered themselves 'social drinkers'. There is no known safe amount of alcohol to use at any time during the pregnancy.

Many pregnant women do make changes to their lifestyle and stop drinking alcohol once they know they are expecting. The concern arises for those women who could be drinking at numerous social events before they know they are pregnant. Since fifty percent of pregnancies are not planned, there are many women who could be partying in their usual fashion, without considering the possibility of pregnancy.

For all women who could conceive a pregnancy, when you hear the common phrase "Drink Responsibly" this holiday season, it also means, use reliable measures to prevent a pregnancy, or choose to stick to the non-alcoholic drink choices on the menu.



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Being Sued Can Ruin a Good Party...

Submitted by Kelly Munroe, Public Health Nurse

Getting together with friends and family can create great stories and memories that will be reminisced for years to come. However in some cases, these memories may be tragic if they are the result of careless behaviour and alcohol and/or drug use. If you are planning a party you must remember...

YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SAFETY AND BEHAVIOUR OF YOUR GUESTS UNTIL THEY ARE SOBER.

Courts are increasingly placing legal responsibility on people that either serve alcohol or host events where alcohol is available.

Here are some tips to help reduce your risk of host liability...

- Don't plan risky activities.
- Have non-alcoholic beverages available for your guests.
- Serve food to your guests. Stay away from "salty foods"; they can make your guests thirsty.
- Make alternate arrangements for those guests that drink too much (i.e. stay overnight or get them a taxi).
- Stop serving alcohol a few hours before the end of the party.
- Don't drink too much yourself.
- Plan ahead. You can deal with problems better when you have the time to think clearly.
- Serve drinks yourself.
An open bar can lead to problems.

For more information about host liability, contact Kelly Munroe, Public Health Nurse at 613-283-2740



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If Your Toddler is Turning 18 months ... check Your Mail

Submitted by Rosemary Sheahan,
Healthy Babies/Healthy Children Coordinator

The Healthy Babies/Healthy Children (HBHC) program of the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit is promoting growth and development awareness to the parents of toddlers in the tri-county

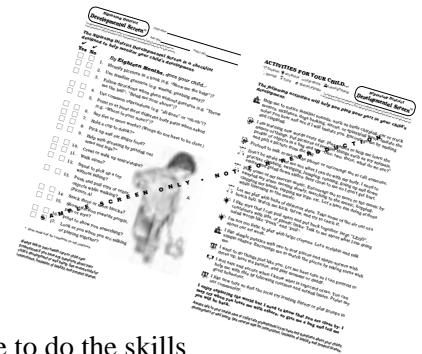
Many parents ask themselves if their child is able to do the skills and activities that other children the same age are doing. When they ask questions, or express concern, some people tell these parents to "wait and see" or the child "will do it when he/she wants to". Research has proven that this attitude is not the most helpful. Any child with a possibility of a delay, or behavioural difficulty, should be investigated as soon as possible. Identifying children in need of extra help or support in the years before the child's 6th birthday is very important because the brain is developing more rapidly than any other time in his/her life. Any extra help that the child receives during this time can help him/her reach developmental milestones, do better in school and reach his/her potential.

For this reason, parents of 17-month-old children are being mailed a copy of a developmental checklist and a letter explaining the importance of parents monitoring their child's growth and development. We are encouraging them to answer the questions on the checklist and to take the completed screen to their health care provider at the child's 18-month medical appointment. A gift for the toddler is also included in the package.

The checklist, called the Nipissing District Developmental Screen (NDDS), was developed in 1993 by a group of professionals working with infants and children. The screens were updated in 2002 after reliability and validity studies were conducted as part of the HBHC evaluation.

The Nipissing District Developmental Screen is an easy-to use tool that allows parents to record the development of their child. It also gives suggestions on how parents can help their child's growth and development. The tool helps to identify children who might be in need of increased intervention in the early years of life. It is not meant to be a substitute for professional advice.

If you would like more information about the campaign please contact the Health Unit at 613-345-5685 or 1-800-660-5853. Additional information about the Nipissing screen is available online at their website www.ndds.ca.



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Give a Safety Gift this Christmas!

Submitted by Julie Ingleby, PHN



Research shows that injuries are predictable and preventable. Taking a safety approach when selecting a gift for a loved one is not only practical but also helps prevent injuries.

Eastern Region Injury Network (ERIN) has developed a useful pamphlet that will give you safety gift ideas for everyone on your shopping list.

Here is a sneak preview at some of the gift ideas for each age group:

<p>Infants/Toddlers (0-4 years of age) Toddlers are naturally curious and like to explore their surroundings. Making simple changes in the home can prevent injuries.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bathwater thermometer • Infant/Child car seat • Safety electrical outlet covers • Night light • Swimming pool alarm • Wall-mounted baby gate for top of stairs
<p>Child/Youth (5-12 years of age) Bicycle helmets can reduce head injuries by 85 percent. Wearing appropriate safety gear for various activities reduces the risk of injury.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approved sports safety gear • Reflective tape/armbands or clothing • Approved Personal Floatation Device (PFD) or life jacket and whistle • Bike reflectors • Booster seat for vehicle • Gift certificate for sports or safety training
<p>Teens (13-18 years of age)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Book of taxi vouchers • Approved sports safety gear • Certificate for Drivers Education Course • Gift certificate for bike or ski tune-up • Phone card for emergency use
<p>Adults (19-55 years of age) Falls are the number one cause of injury in adults and can often lead to loss of independence.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carbon monoxide detectors, smoke detectors and fire extinguishers • Second storey escape ladder • Emergency kit consisting of: energy bars, water, radio, flashlight, batteries, light sticks, and a first aid kit in a small travel bag • Mug with secure lid to prevent scalds and burns
<p>Older Adults (55 + years)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Snow removal service • Installation of grab bars for bathroom • Portable phone • Gift certificate for new eye glasses • Medical alarm response service • Pill organizer

For a detailed look at the pamphlet, check out www.healthunit.org.



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Harm Reduction

Submitted by Sara Craig, Public Health Nurse

Harm reduction is a realistic and humane approach to reducing the individual and social harms associated with drug use. It seeks to lessen the problems associated with drug use through tactics that safeguard the dignity and health of people who use drugs.

Harm reduction values helping people become drug free while dealing with concerns of the present. Realistically, it acknowledges that for many drug users abstinence is a distant goal. In the mean time, a person's health and dignity must be protected as much as possible through harm reductions services, which may include access to health care, needle exchanges, condoms, education, counseling and methadone maintenance programs. Recognizing the reality of drug use, harm reduction programs measure success in terms of individual and community quality of life and health and not in relation to levels of drug use. The harm reduction approach accepts people where they are in the stages of change encouraging healthier choices until such a time that they may choose to and be able to modify their behaviors. Often change takes multiple attempts and support from a variety of services over a period of years, due to the complexity and history of many users lives.



*Logo of "Sharp Advise
Needle Exchange" in
Sydney, Nova Scotia*

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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.

#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)

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

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When You Eat Out...Eat Smart!

Submitted by Heather Deegan, Registered Dietitian/Public Health Nutritionist

Do you ever go to a restaurant and try to make a healthy food choice? It can be a challenge, with the wide variety of foods now available in restaurants, and the wide variety of restaurants to choose from. There are many things you can select or request in a restaurant to ensure you are getting healthy foods.

Tip #1 - Start your meal with a salad.

Including a salad is an easy way to get your veggies. Vegetables have lots of health benefits. They contain vitamins, minerals and fibre, which contribute to health in many ways. Choose a salad that has dark vegetables in it. Vegetables that are darker in colour have more nutrients. Spinach salad and Greek salad pack a real punch when it comes to nutrition. It is also wise to ask for salad dressing on the side. That way, you can decide how much you want to add. Most salad dressings are high in fat and calories, and it is best to use them sparingly.

Tip #2 - Ask for whole grains.

When ordering a sandwich, burger or sub, or when selecting bread from the bread basket, go for whole grain or whole wheat choices. Whole grains are higher in fibre. Fibre has many health benefits, including lowering cholesterol and blood sugars. It also keeps your bowels healthy, which can reduce the odds of getting cancer later in life. Ask for whole wheat toast and whole grain bread or buns for your sandwich or burger.

Tip #3 - Request low-fat cooking methods.

Low-fat cooking methods include broiling, poaching, baking, roasting and grilling (barbecue style). These methods of cooking do not add extra fat to the food, compared to frying or deep-frying. Most restaurants are equipped to cook foods using little or no added fat.

Making these and other healthy choices in a restaurant is now easier than ever before. **Eat Smart!** is Ontario's Healthy Restaurant Program, and many restaurants in your community are part of this program. Eat Smart! Restaurants offer healthier food choices, like a selection of fruits and vegetables, foods prepared with low-fat cooking methods, as well as lower fat desserts.

In addition to healthy food choices, Eat Smart! Restaurants have a proven track record of safe food handling and have at least one kitchen employee who is certified in safe food handling. Eat Smart! Restaurants are also **100% smoke free**, as of February 1, 2004.

If you want to eat in a restaurant that supports your healthy lifestyle, look for an Eat Smart! Restaurant in your community.

For a list of local Eat Smart! Restaurants, or if you would like more information about the Eat Smart! Restaurant program, please contact the Tri Health Coordinator at the Health Unit.



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Smoking and Your Oral Health

Submitted by Leslie Redmond, Registered Dental Hygienist

The Effects of Smoking on Oral Health

While the effects of smoking on your lungs, heart and other organs are not visible to the naked eye, the evidence in your mouth can easily be seen.

Smokers may develop some combination of the following, depending on the amount and length of time they have smoked:

- ◆ Persistent bad breath
- ◆ Discoloured teeth
- ◆ An increase of calculus (tartar) build-up
- ◆ Periodontal (gum and bone) disease that may progress more quickly and be more severe than in non-smokers
- ◆ Jaw bone loss
- ◆ Shifting teeth
- ◆ Oral Cancers
- ◆ Mouth sores
- ◆ Root caries (cavities)
- ◆ Sinusitis
- ◆ Hairy tongue
- ◆ Smoker's lip (like a burn)
- ◆ Altered sense of taste and smell
- ◆ Delayed wound healing

Of the many effects to teeth and gums of smoking cigarettes, oral cancer is of course the most serious. The death rate from oral cancers (cancers of the tongue, mouth, gums, tonsils and pharynx) exceed the death rate from cervical cancer,

Getting Started at Quitting

When you're ready to quit, your oral health professional is ready to support and assist you. There are many resources available to you through your oral health team and your Public Health Office to help you make this important transition.

The Benefits of Quitting

Men and Women of all ages experience major and immediate health benefits when they quit smoking. Ex-smokers have a decreased risk of heart disease, respiratory illnesses, strokes and many cancers. In fact, after 15 years, an ex-smoker's risk of death is similar to that of a person who has never smoked.

Quitting will have a significant, positive impact on oral health as well, reducing the rate and incidence of gum disease, oral cancers, and bone and tooth loss; keeping teeth whiter; and allowing sores to heal and disappear.

Adapted from a brochure which was originally produced as an educational service by the College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario ([CDHO](http://www.cdho.org))

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Quitting takes practice and preparation

Submitted by Yves Decoste, Public Health Nurse

Every year thousands of Ontarians make the same New Year's resolution... "this is the year that I am going to quit smoking". You've always wanted to quit smoking but the addiction is strong.

Could the possibility of winning a new car be enough motivation?

Why not join the growing number of people who sign up each year in the Ontario Quit Smoking contest. Last year over 15,500 smokers and their support buddies entered the contest. The Ontario Tobacco Research Unit (OTRU) reports that 29% of Ontario smokers are thinking about quitting in the next 30 days and 53% are considering quitting in the next 6 months. In total, nearly 2 million Ontario smokers are considering quitting smoking.

Talk to your Dr. and discuss the different options available. Are medications or Nicotine replacement an option for you? Then make a plan.

You can register online at www.quitsmokingontario.ca. The contest is open to adult smokers 19 years of age and older. The contest is launched in January with the quit date of March 1st 2004. All entries must be postmarked or received by midnight February 29th. The quit period for this year's contest is from March 1st, to March 31st, 2004. Winners will be randomly chosen on April 1st, 2004. Verification of winners is done by telephone interview with the entrant, their buddy and a simple urine test.

Quitting does take practice so start now and be ready to join the Quit Smoking 2004 Contest.

Find a buddy, register and prepare to quit. You may be one of the lucky prize winners but you all win in the battle over this addiction.



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Dear Dora

I am married and have 2 small kids. When I get home at night, I am sure they look out the window, see me coming, and start to fight. My wife is usually yelling too. I really don't want to go home some nights.

*Signed,
Avoiding Going Home*

Dear Avoiding

You are not alone. The end of the day is when we all seem to fall apart. The safest place to do this is in your own home and with the ones you love.

There is no sure fire way to handle a chaotic evening, but there are a few things you can try.

Establish a routine that meets basic needs first: food, time together and bed. You and your wife need to set some time aside to discuss how to meet these basic needs for everyone in the family.

How can you make getting an evening meal simpler for everyone? Are there some foods that can be ready sooner than others that the kids can snack on while waiting for the rest of the meal? Can one parent distract the kids, while the other works on food preparation? Are your children able to help?

Set aside time to be together. Turn the TV off, turn down the music and find a comfortable chair. Sit with the kids and read a book or do a puzzle. Try whispering, your children may become quiet to hear what you are saying. Slowing down the pace can also slow down the arguments. In nicer weather, going out for a walk, playing on the lawn or playing hide and seek can burn off some of their energy. The noise level doesn't seem as overwhelming when you go outside.

Bedtime routines help. Start to get the children ready for bed at least ½ an hour before you want them in the bed. This gives time for last minute requests and stalling tactics. Many children don't handle sudden changes well and need time to move from one activity to another. Your goal of getting them into bed has a better chance of being met when you set a realistic timeline for how long it will take. When both you and the children follow the same routine every evening, there are fewer battles to fight.