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# Health Briefs

## Information for a healthy workplace

Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit

Winter 2004

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*Submitted by Lois Dewey, BScN, RN, Public Health Nurse*

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### A Consumer's Guide to Dental Products: Part II

*Submitted by Leslie Redmond, R.D.H., Registered Dental Hygienist*

Some dental products provide care for more specific needs and areas of the mouth that have had dental treatment, and/or require additional support to maintain good oral health.

#### Interdental Stimulators

This dental aid may be found attached to the end of your toothbrush or on a separate implement. The purpose of the interdental stimulator is:

1. To remove bits of food and plaque you may have missed with your brush.
2. To stimulate and exercise your gums.
3. To help reshape the gums after periodontal disease.

Your dental professional will help you choose and show you how to use this dental aid.

#### **Interdental stimulators include:**

- Rubber tips – cone shaped and made of flexible rubber.
- Wedge stimulators - made from wood or plastic, wedge stimulators are triangular in shape and vary in stiffness.

#### Interdental Brush

This aid comes in different shapes and sizes, but all have the same purpose:

1. To remove food in between teeth that remains after brushing.
2. To help in the maintenance of periodontal pockets by making sure the area is clean; this allows gums to be tight and healthy.
3. To assist those patients undergoing orthodontic treatment; this is an extremely valuable tool since working around braces and wires can be difficult.

#### Oral Irrigators

Oral irrigators provide a washing action using a regular or pulsating stream of fluid. The most common fluid used in these machines is water, however, mouthwash diluted in water or salt added to water are also common. These machines have dials that regulate pressure.

#### **The purpose of the oral irrigator is to:**

1. Remove food that remains after brushing.
2. Help orthodontic patients with their dental health.
3. Clean around complex dentistry (crowns and bridges).
4. Carefully, irrigate periodontal pockets.

Directions from your dental professional can make this tool effective for you.

#### Tooth Whitening

Tooth whiteners are available either over-the-counter or from your dental office. It is actually a bleaching process that lightens discolorations of enamel and dentin – caused by aging, tea, coffee and smoking.

1. Over the counter products, although they are less expensive, often allow exposure of the whitening agent to mouth tissues.
2. Tooth whitening systems from your dental office include custom-fitted application trays, and progress evaluation. Prior to introducing a whitening system, your dental professional will examine you to determine whether you have untreated decay or restorative work like crowns or caps that do not whiten.

Dental products can make great gifts or stocking stuffers, and can be very motivational tools for increasing oral health. If you are unsure about a dental product, consult your dental professional or contact a Registered Dental Hygienist or Certified Dental Assistant with the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit.

*Adapted from materials provided by the ODHA website*  
[www.odha.ca](http://www.odha.ca)

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

*Submitted by Tawnya Boileau, RN, BScN, 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 may contribute to premature aging, burning and skin cancer. UV rays may be more intense near snow, as snow can reflect up to 80% of the sun's rays. As well, UV rays are more intense at higher altitudes due to the thinner atmosphere. Therefore, the combination of the reflective surface of 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.

### ► 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 wrap-around 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; sunburns experienced in childhood have been linked to an increased risk of developing skin cancer later in life.

#### Sources:

World Health Organization  
Canadian Cancer Society  
Canadian Dermatology Association  
The Cancer Council Victoria



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## Apple Cider: Is it safe?

*Submitted by Jennifer Bricker B.A.A, C.P.H.I(c), Public Health Inspector*

Apple cider is a healthy and delicious Canadian treat.

Most apple cider sold in Ontario is pasteurized and safe to drink. Pasteurization is a process where the cider is heated to a high temperature and then rapidly cooled to kill any harmful disease causing bacteria from animal feces such as E-coli 015:H7 (cause of the Walkerton outbreak) and salmonella. Apples such as windfalls that are harvested from the ground are sometimes used to make apple cider and may be contaminated with bacteria from animal feces on the ground surface.

What you may not be aware of is that not all cider is pasteurized. This may be particularly true of cider purchased on small farms, roadside stands or at farmers markets. If cider is not pasteurized there is the possibility that the cider may be contaminated with dangerous bacteria that could cause serious illness. Those most at risk of becoming ill are young children, the elderly and people with weakened immune systems.

### How do I know if cider is pasteurized?

- Health Canada encourages producers of unpasteurized cider to voluntarily label their products as unpasteurized, however this is not a legal requirement.

### Reducing the Risk:

- Look for labels on products indicating that it is unpasteurized
- If labels are not present ask the vendor if the product is pasteurized
- Boil unpasteurized cider before consuming it if you want to take extra precautions
- Avoid serving unpasteurized products to those most at risk (children, the elderly and those with weakened immune systems)
- Don't rely on freezing or refrigeration to make unpasteurized cider safe. Freezing and refrigeration does not kill bacteria, it only slows down their growth.

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## Test Your Folic Acid Knowledge

*Submitted by Julie Lenk, RD, Public Health Dietitian*

Folic acid is a B vitamin needed during the early weeks of pregnancy for the healthy development of a baby's spine, brain and skull. When folic acid is taken before becoming pregnant and in early pregnancy, it has been proven to help reduce the risk of some birth defects by more than 70%. These birth defects, called neural tube defects (NTDs), such as anencephaly or spina bifida, can affect the brain and/or the spinal cord. NTDs occur when the tissues that form the brain and spinal cord fail to develop properly.

What do you know about folic acid? Are you informed? Try this quiz.

**1. Folic acid reduces the risk of:**

- A. Down's Syndrome
- B. Cystic Fibrosis
- C. Measles
- D. Neural tube defects

**2. How can a woman of childbearing age be sure that she is getting enough folic acid everyday?**

- A. Take a multivitamin containing 0.4 mg of folic acid
- B. Eat foods fortified with folic acid, such as breakfast cereals and pre-cooked rice
- C. Eat foods high in folic acid such as broccoli, spinach and orange juice
- D. All of the above

**3. Women of childbearing age who could become pregnant should take a multivitamin containing:**

- A. 1000 mg of folic acid everyday
- B. 0.2 mg of folic acid everyday
- C. 0.4 mg of folic acid everyday
- D. 20 mg folic acid everyday

**4. To help prevent neural tube defects, when should a woman START taking folic acid supplements?**

- A. After she discovers she is pregnant
- B. After her first prenatal visit
- C. At least 2-3 months before she becomes pregnant
- D. During the last three months of pregnancy

Answers: 1D ; 2D ; 3C ; 4C

Since almost half of all Canadian pregnancies are unplanned, it is recommended that all women who could become pregnant take a multivitamin containing 0.4mg of folic acid every day. In addition to this multivitamin supplement, it is important to eat foods rich in folate (folic acid) and foods fortified with folic acid. *Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating* can help you to make healthy food choices.

- Foods rich in folate include: asparagus, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, corn, romaine lettuce, spinach, orange juice, sunflower seeds, liver, beans, peanut butter, peanuts, lentils, bean sprouts, green peas, tomato juice, cantaloupe, hummus, and eggs.
- Foods fortified with folic acid include: breakfast cereals, pre-cooked rice, plant-based beverages such as rice and soy milk, goat's milk.

If you have any questions or would like more information about folic acid please contact the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit's Health Action Line at 1-800-660-5853 (345-5685) and ask to speak with a Registered Dietitian.

*Reference:*

*Folic Acid It's never Too Early. Folic Acid Awareness Community Action Guide 2002. Folic Acid Alliance of Ontario*

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## Try Some Healthy Snacks at Work

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

### Who says snacks can't be healthy?

Snacks are an important source of nutrients, and many of us rely on them to get through the day. They keep energy levels up so we can focus on our work (and play) and snacks also help curb hunger until the next meal.

When it comes to snacking throughout the day, the most important thing to remember is: Make those snacks count! Choose nutritious foods that contribute to your overall nutritional well-being. Since we all need around 50 nutrients each day, selecting a variety of healthy snack foods can really boost nutrient intake.

Nutrient-Dense Snack Foods			
Choose foods from the 4 food groups that are loaded with nutrients.			
Grain Products:	Vegetables & Fruits:	Milk Products:	Meat & Alternatives:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• whole wheat tortilla shells</li><li>• multi grain bagels</li><li>• whole wheat pita</li><li>• high fibre crackers</li><li>• whole wheat bread sticks and pretzels</li><li>• whole grain (high fibre) cereals</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• baby carrots</li><li>• cut-up vegetables (bite-size)</li><li>• vegetable juice</li><li>• fresh or canned fruit</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• lower fat yogurt</li><li>• lower fat milk (2%, 1% or skim)</li><li>• chocolate or strawberry milk</li><li>• cheese</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• lean deli meats (like turkey, roast beef, ham)</li><li>• canned tuna and salmon</li><li>• nut butter (peanut, almond, cashew)</li><li>• eggs</li><li>• beans</li><li>• nuts and seeds (almonds, pecans, sunflower seeds)</li></ul>

Limit high fat, high salt snack foods like nacho chips, cheezies and potato chips. Do you love to snack on chips and salsa? Try dipping crackers like Triscuits in your salsa instead. They are high in fibre and low in fat compared to nacho chips.

What about the coffee shop? Do you get your coffee break treat from the local donut vendor? Go for a café latte or café au lait (half coffee, half milk). This will provide some extra nutrients from milk along with your coffee. And, of course, low fat muffins are a healthier option instead of donuts or cookies.

### Fast and Nutritious Snack Ideas

- raisin bread with cashew butter
- muffin and café latte
- yogurt with granola mixed in
- hummus with sliced cucumbers to dip
- roasted red pepper dip with whole wheat bread sticks
- granola bar and chocolate milk
- tzatziki with whole wheat pita to dip
- peanut butter with apple slices to dip
- melon chunks and cottage cheese
- salsa with wheat crackers to dip

### Reality Check

Let's face it. There are days when a juicy, sweet piece of fresh fruit simply will not do when what you *really* want is a chocolate bar. On days like that, go for a chocolate bar and share it with your co-workers. Once you have satisfied your chocolate craving, you can get on with your day and plan for your next healthy snack. Of course, the chocolate bar should be the exception rather than the rule when it comes to snack foods.

For more information on healthy snacks, contact a dietitian at the Health Unit.

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### Dear Dora

*Submitted by Erin McLean, RN, BNSc, Public Health Nurse*

*Dear Dora:*

*My wife and I need you to settle an argument. She likes to keep things and I like to throw them away. This week it was about prescription medicines. I want to get rid of my leftover Tylenol #3's from when I got hurt playing hockey and she wants to keep them. What do you think?*

*Signed,  
Living with a pack rat*

Dear Living,

There are things to keep and things to throw away, but on this item I agree with you. All medications should be treated with caution and respect. They can be harmful if used the wrong way.

When you get a prescription filled at the drug store, it is for a particular reason. When that reason no longer exists, get rid of the medication. Here's why:

- Medications expire.
- Medications come in different strengths. You should never share your medications with another person.
- Medications, like antibiotics, need to be finished, not stopped and saved for later.

### **November is Medicine Clean Out month and here are the key messages:**

1. Return out-dated, expired and no-longer-required medicines to your local pharmacy for proper disposal.
2. Medicines are hazardous wastes- don't throw them out in the garbage and don't flush.
3. Medicines can lead to injury. Protect your household by keeping medicines locked and away from children.

If you want more information on this topic, please call our Health Action Line at 1 800 660 5853 or visit our website at [www.healthunit.org](http://www.healthunit.org).

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## What's New in Baby Shots?

*Submitted by Martina Flanagan, BScN, RN, Public Health Nurse*



By January 1, 2005 three new publicly funded vaccines will be added to the recommended schedule of routine childhood immunizations.

They include a vaccine for Chicken Pox, a vaccine for Meningococcal Meningitis, and a vaccine for Pneumococcal Disease.

The **Chicken Pox vaccine** will protect children from chicken pox and its complications such as the serious bacterial infections example, necrotizing fasciitis or "flesh-eating disease".

The **meningococcal C-conjugate vaccine** will protect children from invasive meningococcal disease including meningitis and blood infections.

The **Pneumococcal conjugate vaccine** will protect children from invasive pneumococcal diseases, such as meningitis, pneumonia, bloodstream infections and ear infections.

By January 1, 2005 these vaccines will be provided free across Ontario to all children born on or after January 1, 2004.

In addition, the chicken pox vaccine and meningococcal C-conjugate vaccine will be available free for other age groups who are at risk of these diseases.

For more information ask your doctor or contact the Health Unit at the Health ACTION Line 1-800-660-5853 or (613) 345-5685.

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### Smoking is a workplace issue: Consider supporting your employees in their quit attempts.

*Submitted by Yves Décoste RN, BScN,  
Public Health Nurse, Tobacco Coordinator  
A member of the Ontario Quit Smoking Contest Planning Team*

The health benefits of quitting occur for all types of smokers, men and women, young and old. Even those who have developed smoking-related problems like heart disease can benefit. For example, compared to continuing smokers, people who quit smoking after having a heart attack reduce their chances of having another heart attack by 50%. They also reduce their risk of dying prematurely by 50%.

You benefit immediately from quitting smoking:

- Within 8 hours, the level of carbon monoxide in your body decreases and oxygen increases to normal levels.
- The risk of a heart attack begins to decrease after just two days.
- Your sense of smell and taste improve and return to normal within just 48 hours.
- After 3 days, your lung capacity will have increased... making breathing easier.
- After the first year, the risk of heart attack is cut in half.

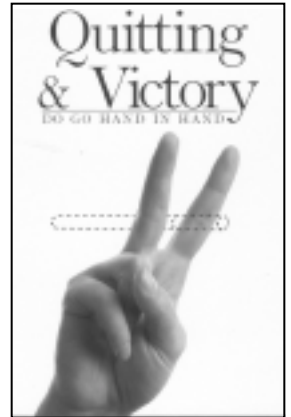
Employees in workplaces with no smoking restrictions smoke almost five more cigarettes daily than those whose workplaces completely ban smoking, says a study by the University of Toronto's Ontario Tobacco Research Unit (OTRU). The study determined that 24 per cent of employed adult Canadians are daily smokers who consume an average of 17 cigarettes daily. In workplaces where smoking is banned, 18 per cent of workers smoke daily and their average consumption drops to 15.4 cigarettes per day. "What this study shows is that the bans also have health benefits for smokers themselves" states the study's author OTRU's Dr. Thomas Stephens. By contrast, when there are no bans, 40 per cent of workers are daily smokers and average 20.1 cigarettes daily. The results were not affected by work stress, depression or attempts to quit smoking within the past 12 months.

Again this year in Ontario, smokers will get an added incentive to quit. The Quit Smoking 2005 Contest will be launched in December and promoted in January during National Non-Smoking Week. The Leeds Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit in partnership with the Tri Health Team will be looking at promoting the contest locally with workplaces.

Smokers are asked to make a plan, find a buddy, register and quit smoking for at least all of the month of February in order to win great prizes. With Ontario's Quit Smoking Contest 2005 everyone wins because quitting smoking and victory do go hand in hand. To find out more details about the contest, which starts December 1st 2004, log on to [www.quitsmokingontario.ca](http://www.quitsmokingontario.ca)

This year, more than 45,000 people will die in Canada due to smoking. Of those, more than 300 non-smokers will die of lung cancer and at least 700 non-smokers will die of coronary heart disease caused by exposure to second-hand smoke. Tobacco smoke contains over 4,000 chemicals, including at least 50 that cause, initiate or promote cancer such as tar, ammonia, carbon monoxide, oxides of nitrogen and benzopyrene. **Information from the Canadian Cancer Society reveals that** Smoking is specifically related to about 87% of lung cancer cases. Environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) is the number one risk factor for lung cancer among non-smokers.

For more information log on to our website at [www.healthunit.org](http://www.healthunit.org) or call our health action line at 1-800-660-5853



## Health Unit Offices

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# Health Briefs

## Information for a healthy workplace

Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit

Winter 2004

## The "ABC's" of Pregnancy

Submitted by Denise Kall R.N. B.N., Public Health Nurse

Pregnancy is an exciting time for a woman and her family. It can also be a challenging time. A pregnant woman and her partner have many decisions to make in the coming months. They also have many expectations and maybe several worries or fears. One way to make sure the new 'little one' gets the best start possible is to visit the updated 'Pregnancy' section of the Health Unit website.



For starters, couples can find information to help them prepare before pregnancy. The health of both the mother and father are important factors in the health of the baby. Once pregnancy is confirmed, the website information can help women learn what to expect during the months of pregnancy and how to stay healthy throughout. There is information to help plan for the baby's arrival and what to expect following delivery.

For each aspect of pregnancy, there is information just for fathers. A separate section offers information to teenagers who are pregnant, including a section for 'Young Dads'.

Congratulations if you are one of the many families who will welcome a new baby in the near future. Let the Health Unit website be a source of reliable information to support you during this exciting time. Visit [www.healthunit.org](http://www.healthunit.org)

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# Health Briefs

## Information for a healthy workplace

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## Where's My Motivation?

*Submitted by Julie Bolton, BNSc, RN, Public Health Nurse*

The numerous benefits of regular physical activity are well known but most of us lack the motivation to start or maintain a routine. With our busy lives, physical activity is just one more thing on our daily "to do" list. For many people this becomes the first thing we skip when time is limited. Here are some tips to help you stay motivated and stick to a routine.

Setting a reasonable goal is a good first step. Think about what you want to achieve. Is it better health, more energy or more social interactions? When your goals are realistic you are more likely to work towards meeting them. Be sure to think about how physical activity will fit into your life and set your goals with that in mind.

Focusing on activities that you enjoy will turn physical activity into something you have fun doing and look forward to most days of the week rather than seeing it as a chore. If you enjoy going for a walk around the block, do it more often. Sometimes inviting a friend along will help you keep the date and can be a fun social way to de-stress. Inviting your family out for a walk after supper can be a great way to spend time together and gets everyone more active. Rotate activities often so you don't become bored.

Remember that every little bit counts. Most adults need to be physically active for 30-60 minutes most days of the week. This can be broken into ten-minute blocks of time that add up to your daily total. Performing physical activity in smaller blocks of time can make it easier to fit into your day and help you stay motivated.

Focus on the benefits! Regular activity can help with stress management, increase energy, improve fitness, improve sleep and increases relaxation, to name a few. Once you have started to see the benefits of regular physical activity, it can help motivate you to keep going.

It can be a struggle for many of us to maintain our motivation from time to time but making it a part of our daily routine and following the above suggestions will help. If you would like more information on physical activity please visit our website at [www.healthunit.org](http://www.healthunit.org)

Or call our Health Action line 1-800-660-5853.

*Sources: Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Literature – [www.cftri.ca](http://www.cftri.ca)  
Physical Activity Resource Centre (PARC) – [www.ophea.net/parc](http://www.ophea.net/parc)*



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# Health Briefs

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Winter 2004



## Winter Play Safety

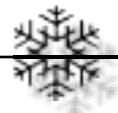
*Submitted by Lois Dewey, BScN, RN, Public Health Nurse*

Winter can be a wonderful time for play outdoors if children are wearing the right clothes to keep them warm, safe and dry.

### Clothing for outdoor play:

To prevent frostbite, children need to wear:

- a hat (warm, close-fitting, and covering ear lobes)
- mittens (gloves do not keep hands as warm as mittens),
- loose layers (an absorbent synthetic fabric next to skin, a warmer middle layer, and a water resistant/repellent outer layer). Ensure jackets are zipped up.
- socks A single pair of socks, either wool or a wool blend (with silk or polypropylene) is better than cotton which offers no insulation when wet. Avoid extra thick socks as they can cause cold feet by restricting blood flow and air circulation around the toes.
- boots Be sure boots are dry and the right size for your child.
- neck warmer Use tube-shaped neck warmers instead of scarves. If scarves must be used, tuck them into jackets. Remove drawstrings on hoods and jackets because they are a safety hazard.
- sunscreen even on cloudy days



### Warning:

If a child gets wet it is important to change their clothes and boots as soon as possible to prevent frostbite.

Keep children inside when:  
The temperature falls below  $-25^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $-13^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) or  
the wind chill factor is reported as  $-28^{\circ}\text{C}$ .



**Remember:** children who are unable to move around when outside, such as those in a stroller, they will need extra layers as they will become chilled sooner than those who are able to move about.

