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Health Briefs

Information for a healthy workplace

Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit

Winter 2005

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Tips for healthy holiday eating

Submitted by Meena Parameswaran, MAN, R.D., Registered Dietitian/Public Health Nutritionist

It is tough to eat healthy during the holidays, a busy season for social events and last-minute shopping. But, with planning you can enjoy holiday treats without abandoning healthy eating altogether.

Healthy holiday alternatives

There are ways to make healthier holiday meals and snacks. Try the following ideas for new twists on old favourites.

- Instead of higher-fat sour cream and mayonnaise for dips, use low-fat versions. Try mashing a can of beans and add spices, or make hummus. These dips are low-fat and tasty.
- Choose whole grains: crackers, bread sticks, buns and bread.
- Snack on pretzels, popcorn or nuts instead of potato chips.
- Make high flavour, lower fat mashed potatoes with buttermilk instead of cream or butter.
- Roast vegetables until they are tender and puree with water as a gravy substitute. Try a mix of carrots, peppers, onions and zucchini.
- Add cranberries, diced apples and raisins to stuffing for a flavour boost.
- Offer a fruit tray for an appetizer or dessert.

Eat reasonable portions

It is easy to eat more than usual during the holidays. Be mindful of your portion sizes. According to Canada's Food Guide, one serving of meat or fish is the size of a deck of cards. One serving of grain products is 8-10 crackers, a small dinner roll or 3-4 bread sticks. Use small amounts of fats, like butter, margarine, gravy and rich sauces, and avoid adding these during food preparation.

Eat enough to satisfy your hunger and stop when you feel full. You can save leftovers for a later meal or snack.

Holiday drinks

If you drink beer, wine and spirits, keep in mind that alcohol has no vitamins or minerals and provides excess calories, which can contribute to weight gain. Follow the **Low Risk Drinking Guidelines** in order to manage the risks of drinking and be sure to eat at the same time. If drinking alcohol will put you or others at risk, avoid it completely.

Don't deprive

During the holidays you may eat foods that do not fit within a healthy eating pattern and you may sometimes eat more than you normally do. Keep in mind that healthy eating is not defined by how much we eat at one meal or during one day, it is how we eat overall. Enjoy the pleasure of eating foods that you normally do not take the time to make or buy. Food choices during the holiday season will not make or break your health for the rest of the year when balanced with regular healthy eating.

Avoid the New Year's resolution diet

If you make unhealthy food choices over the holidays, don't be discouraged. Instead of planning a "diet" to lose weight after the holidays, simply get back on track with your healthy eating and make time for physical activity every day. You will improve your health by making healthy food choices and being active.

Enjoy a healthy holiday season!

For more information on eating healthy and the Low Risk Drinking Guidelines, please contact the Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District Health Unit's Health Action Line at 1-800-660-5853 (or 613-345-5685) and ask to speak with a Registered Dietitian.



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Staff give their all in sickness, health

Adapted from the Ottawa Sun written by Anne Howland, Money Editor
Submitted by Martina Flanagan, R.N., B.Sc.N., Public Health Nurse



You wake up. It's a weekday. Your throat is raspy, your head aches and you're bone tired.

Do you a) drag yourself out of bed, pull on your work clothes and head out the door to the office as usual? Or b) make a quick detour to the medicine cabinet, phone your boss to say you're staying home sick, and collapse in bed?

While you probably yearn for the second option, if you're like many Canadians, you likely feel the pressure to go to the office. After all, work is stacking up, you have appointments to keep and your colleagues probably won't appreciate filling in for you.

Look out, co-workers

So off you go, snuffling and sneezing. It's commendable, but think about it. Your productivity is probably zero, you likely end up prolonging your illness and, what many of us don't consider, you end up putting your co-workers at greater risk of getting sick. But despite the logic to staying home when you're ill, according to a recent survey, today's workers are committed to their jobs—perhaps overly so.

An astonishing 80% of employees polled said they frequently show up to work while sick. A mere 8% said they never come in to the office when feeling under the weather.

The survey, developed by Office Team, was based on responses from 594 men and women, 18 years of age or older and employed in office environments.

“Many employees fear they'll fall behind if they stay at home when they're not feeling well,” said Diane Domeyer, executive director of OfficeTeam. “However, it's preferable to take a day or two to recuperate, rather than risk exacerbating a condition or passing an illness on to co-workers.”

Most managers are aware that ailing employees often come into the office, but the practice may be more common than they realize.

Rest “right thing to do”

In a separate poll of 100 senior Canadian executives - including those from human resources, finance and marketing departments - only 21% of respondents said they thought sick employees came into work very frequently when ill. With greater flu concerns this year, many firms are encouraging sick employees to stay home.

“Managers should let employees know that staying away from the office is the right thing to do when they are ill,” said Domeyer. And the stay-at-home edict doesn't stop with the rank and file, she says. “Actions often speak louder than words—if supervisors show up when they're feeling poorly, employees may feel pressure to do the same.”

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A balance between work and play

Submitted by Shannon MacIntyre, B.Sc.N., R.N., Public Health Nurse

Most people are aware that physical activity is good for them. Physical activity alone can reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke, hypertension, and type II diabetes by as much as 50%, as well as reduce the risk of osteoporosis, arthritis, some cancers, and depression (Health Canada). Physical activity also improves quality of life, increases energy and relaxation, helps prevent falls as it builds stronger muscles and bones, and helps to reduce stress. For people with chronic aches and pains, physical activity can also help to decrease this discomfort, allowing people to move more easily. Being active at work is not only healthy, but will help you feel better and more refreshed.

It may seem impossible to be active at work. However, most people spend about half of their waking hours at work, so it can be a great time to bring more activity into your day. For instance, you can:

- Try walking or riding your bike to and from work
- Park a couple blocks away from your work site
- Get off the bus a few stops early
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator
- Take a walking break instead of a coffee break
- Go for a swim on your lunch hour
- Take time to stretch regularly throughout your day



You may have to ask your employer to help support you by providing bike racks, shower facilities, or allowing for an extra half hour added to your lunch break a couple times a week. It is okay to ask for these things. Many employers are aware that happy and healthy employees actually save them money by using less sick time and reducing staff turn over.

Health Canada recommends that adults get 30-60 minutes of moderate activity, four or more days a week including endurance, flexibility and strength activities. These activities can be broken up into 10 minute blocks. It's a good idea to consult your health care provider before starting a new activity. Physical activity is safe for most people, just be sure to start slowly and build up. It will also help if you plan ahead, dress for the weather and keep yourself safe and comfortable.



It is still a good idea to have family activities in the evening and weekends. This will give you the chance to show your children the importance of a healthy lifestyle and how to enjoy being active.

If you require more information or resources contact Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit at 1-800-660-5853 or visit our website at www.healthunit.org And ask for a free logbook to keep track of your activities.

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Health Unit wishes to recognize local pharmacies for their contribution to poison prevention

Submitted by Lois Dewey, B.Sc.N., R.N., Public Health Nurse

For the past three years the Health Unit has run an information campaign with the messages:

- Return out-dated, expired and no-longer-required medicines to the pharmacy for proper disposal.
- Medicines are hazardous waste and should not be thrown out in the garbage or flushed.
- Medicines can lead to injury. Households are protected if medicines are locked and kept away from children.

The Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit thanks our local pharmacies for their significant contribution to the prevention of poisoning in the tri-county area. Almost all of our pharmacies now accept out-dated, expired and no-longer-required medicines for safe disposal free of charge. These medications are accepted all through the year. Every medication returned reduces the potential for injuries to everyone, especially our children, seniors, and the environment.

The message is clear: old medicines should never be kept "just-in-case." Keeping, taking or sharing medicines can lead to serious injury such as falls and poisoning of seniors and children. Disposing of medications safely ensures that they do not harm your family or the environment.



To find a pharmacy which accepts no longer required medicines in your area, watch for the plaque thanking the pharmacy for their participation in Medicine Clean Out, call 1-800-660-5853 or visit www.healthunit.org

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Pregnancy and the workplace

Submitted by Denise Kall, R.N., B.N., Reproductive Health Program Leader

The majority of women now work outside the home. In Canada, women make up over 50% of the workforce and more than 90% of these women are in their prime childbearing years. Eight out of ten women will become pregnant during their working years. Clearly this will have an impact for a large number of women, their families and their employers. In general, it is safe for most women to continue working during pregnancy. There are however several things employees and their employers should consider to reduce risks to the pregnancy.

Certain types of work can cause a baby to be born too soon or too small. This could include:

- Standing for long periods
- Hard physical work: lifting, pushing, pulling
- Long work hours or long work weeks
- Stressful work environment
- Excessive heat and noise
- Exposure to toxic substances such as lead, PCB's, solvents or toxic waste
- Exposure to infectious materials

For Men Too:

Workplace hazards such as radiation, smoke, heat, or chemicals can cause damaged sperm or low sperm counts.



What can I do to increase my health and the health of my baby?

- Take responsibility to find out about the work environment
- Check for exposure to any of the items above
- Talk to your employer, your health & safety committee, your occupational health nurse and your health care provider about your work
- Continue to practice healthy lifestyle behaviours: eat well, exercise, do not smoke, drink alcohol or take drugs
- Wash your hands frequently: after working, after using the bathroom, and before eating
- Take regular rest breaks
- Modify work habits if necessary
- Talk with your employer about modified work or work reassignment if needed

Information and a supportive workplace can help a woman have a healthy pregnancy and a healthy baby, while continuing to be a productive worker.

For more information call the Health Action line at 1-800-660-5853 or visit www.healthunit.org

Information adapted from the Best Start
Resource Centre: www.beststart.org



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Workplace alcohol and drug policies

Submitted by Rebecca Kavanagh, R.N., B.Sc.N., Smiths Falls FOCUS Coordinator

Studies have shown that the abuse of alcohol and drugs in the workplace can cost Canadian workplaces billions of dollars in lost productivity, injuries, absenteeism, medical costs and liability.

One way to address this issue is to adopt a clear and comprehensive alcohol and drug workplace policy. The goal of a well-written policy should provide access to current and accurate information. This would include substance abuse and all of its effects, methods that outline early detection protocols, and a process to support affected employees and their families to seek out treatment options that meet their specific needs.

The benefits of an alcohol and drug workplace policy:

- Employees and management will have a clear understanding of how the organization deals with substance use in the workplace
- Can guide managers and fellow employees on how to deal with an individual with a substance use problem
- Improve workplace health and safety
- Can assist and support employees and/or their families with a substance abuse problem
- Reduce liability
- Reduce workplace injuries related to substance abuse
- Demonstrates a supportive and healthy workplace to its employees

To learn more about workplace alcohol and drug policies in the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark area, contact the Smiths Falls FOCUS Community Coalition (613) 283-2740.

Helpful websites:



APOLNET: Alcohol Policy Network
http://www.apolnet.org/actpacks/re_wrk.html

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism
<http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/aa44-text.htm>

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Keep healthy with regular Pap tests

By Dr. Verna Mai, Director, Screening Programs, Division of Preventive Oncology, Cancer Care Ontario
Submitted with permission by Bonnie Schnittker, R.N., P.H.N. and Tawnya Boileau, R.N., B.Sc.N., Public Health Nurses, Co- chairs Cancer Committee

Every week in Ontario, about 10 women will be diagnosed with cancer of the cervix, and three women will die from this disease. But the surprising fact is that most cases of cervical cancer are very preventable with a simple, very effective screening test. It's called the Pap test, and it can save your life.

If you have ever been sexually active, you need to have regular Pap tests. If your tests are normal for three years in a row, says the Ontario Cervical Screening Program, then you should have the Pap test every two to three years to ensure good health. Here are some answers to the most frequently asked questions about the Pap test.

I feel fine. Why do I need to have a Pap test?

The *best* time to see a doctor for a Pap test is when you feel fine and have no symptoms. Having regular Pap tests helps ensure that you'll stay healthy. That's because the test helps detect cell changes early, *before* they become cancer and when there are more treatment options and a better chance of successful treatment. Early detection saves lives!

My doctor never mentioned a Pap test.

You don't have to wait for your doctor to suggest that you have the test. If your doctor doesn't suggest it, *you* can ask about your need for a Pap test.

I'm too old for a Pap test!

Even if you're past menopause, you still need a Pap test every two to three years until at least age 70. A women's risk of developing cancer of the cervix increases as she ages, so it's very important that women in their 40s, 50s, and 60s are screened regularly.

I feel embarrassed or uncomfortable at the thought of having a Pap test.

It's common to feel a bit anxious about the test, but you can do lots of things to feel more comfortable. Some women prefer to have a female doctor or nurse practitioner perform the exam. If you have a male health care provider, you can have a female nurse or assistant stay in the room during your exam. You can also ask a friend or family member to come with you.

If you're still nervous, talk to your health care provider about how you feel. If English is not your first language, you can bring a friend or family member to translate for you.

A Pap test may be a bit uncomfortable, but takes only a couple of minutes. And after your appointment, you can be reassured that you've just taken an important step to safeguard your health.

When was the last time you had a Pap test? If it's been more than a few years, or if you've never had one, it's time to make an appointment. It could save your life.

For more information talk to your health care provider or call the Canadian Cancer Society at 1-888-939-3333, or contact the Health Unit at 1-800-660-5853.



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New beer products contain caffeine

Submitted by Rebecca Kavanagh, R.N., B.Sc.N., Smiths Falls FOCUS Project Coordinator and Dianne Oickle, M.Sc., R.D., Registered Dietitian, Public Health Nutritionist

Two new alcoholic beers that contain caffeine have appeared on the market.

In the spring of 2005, the two largest breweries in Canada unveiled new beer products that not only contain average or above average alcohol content for beer, but they also contain caffeine. The strategic marketing campaigns used by the breweries have been directed towards the 18-24 year old segment, and suggest to the consumer that they may reap boosts of energy by consuming these products. The source of caffeine comes from a South American plant called guarana. The breweries argue that since guarana is a natural source of caffeine, there is little risk of harm to the individual and claim that they do not advertise their products as an "energy source." The approximate caffeine content of a standard-sized bottle of these new caffeine-containing beers is about equivalent to half a cup of coffee, or one can of regular cola.

Health professionals are concerned about young people using this type of product for a number of reasons. The targeted age group consumes 35% of the total amount of alcohol that is consumed in Canada (MADD Canada, 2005). Furthermore, they tend to concentrate their drinking patterns to those that occur in a binge (five or more drinks at one time). Consuming caffeinated beer in large quantities puts anyone at risk for injury due to impaired

senses and physiological harm, such as impaired driving. Caffeine is a stimulant that may combat the effect of drowsiness cause by alcohol. As a result, individuals may feel a false sense of security in terms of their ability to perform tasks that require alertness and quick response times, such as driving a car. According to MADD (Mother's Against Drunk Driving) Canada, this age group is already over represented in traffic fatalities and other alcohol-related trauma deaths and injuries in our country.

Alcohol and caffeine both have a diuretic effect. This means that they cause the body to lose water and thereby increase the risk of dehydration. Dehydration due to excessive alcohol and caffeine consumption can lead to increased drowsiness beyond what is already caused by the consumption of alcohol alone. As well, dehydration can lead to severe illness and increased risk of hospitalization.

Adults and youth alike should be made aware that beer containing caffeine is an alcoholic beverage, not an energy booster. In addition, the caffeine contained in these drinks does not combat the impairment effects of alcohol. Care should be taken at all times when alcohol is consumed in order to avoid injuries or worst tragedies.

For more information on Low Risk Drinking Guidelines, please contact the Leeds, Grenville, and Lanark District Health Unit's toll free Health Action Line at 1-800-660-5853 or (613) 345-5685.

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Am I too old to worry about safe sex?

Submitted by Tammy Welk, R.N., B.Sc.N., Public Health Nurse

Having safe sex is important at any age. When one third of marriages are ending in divorce, it is safe to say that a lot of adults start dating again. But, is it safe to say they don't need to worry about infections?

Sexually transmitted infections don't care if you are 16 or 38 years old. Infections such as chlamydial infection, gonorrhea, syphilis, genital warts, genital herpes, hepatitis B and trichomoniasis can and do happen in sexually active older people.

Then there is HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. The number of older people with HIV/AIDS is growing.

You are at risk if you have more than one sexual partner or are recently divorced or widowed and have started dating and having unprotected sex again.

What can you do to protect yourself from infections?

- Discuss sex with your partner. If you can't discuss sex, then you shouldn't be doing it.
- Find out about your partner's health and sexual history.
- Avoid alcohol or mood altering drugs as they may lessen your ability to make responsible choices.
- Go to a health clinic or your doctor for testing. **Many couples have attended one of our five full service confidential clinics in the health unit for testing.** This assures you and your partner that you have been tested.
- Practice safer sex by using a latex lubricated condom.



You are never too old to be at risk.

For more information on this topic, call the Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit and ask to speak to a Clinical Service Nurse, or visit our website at www.healthunit.org

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If you have any questions or would like your business added to our mailing list please call the Health Action Line and ask for Lynda Earl.



Health Briefs

Information for a healthy workplace

Leeds, Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit

Winter 2005

The Smoke-Free Ontario Act and its impact on workplaces

Submitted by Yves Decoste, R.N., B.Sc., Public Health Nurse, Tobacco Coordinator and Kim McCann B.A.Sc. CPHI(C) Public Health Inspector

On May 31st 2006 the Smoke-Free Ontario Act will come into effect. The intent of this legislation is to protect all citizens in Ontario from the ill effects of tobacco smoke exposure in workplaces and public places. The legislation will also strengthen measures to ensure only those 19 years of age and older can buy cigarettes and will phase out the display of tobacco products, with a complete ban beginning May 31, 2008.

The Smoke-Free Ontario Act which will combine the intent of both the Smoking in the Workplace Act and the Tobacco Control Act will be enforced by local Health Units. What will these new restrictions on workplace smoking mean to employers, employees and the workplace?

In the Smoke-Free Ontario Act an "employer" is defined as follows:

"employer" includes an owner, operator, proprietor, manager, superintendent, overseer, receiver or trustee of an activity, business, work, trade, occupation, profession, project or undertaking who has control or direction of, or is directly or indirectly responsible for, the employment of a person in it. ("employer")

The legislation prohibits smoking or holding lighted tobacco in any enclosed workplace.

An "enclosed workplace" is defined as:

- (a) the inside of any place, building or structure or vehicle or conveyance or a part of any of them,
 - (i) that is covered by a roof,
 - (ii) that employees work in or frequent during the course of their employment whether or not they are acting in the course of their employment at the time, and
 - (iii) that is not primarily a private dwelling,

In order to ensure compliance and to support the intent of the legislation, which is to protect workers from second-hand smoke exposure, certain conditions have been legislated that an employer must follow.

Employer obligations are as follows:

Every employer shall, with respect to an enclosed workplace or a place or area over which the employer exercises control,

- (a) ensure compliance with this section;
- (b) give notice to each employee in an enclosed workplace or place or area that smoking is prohibited in the enclosed workplace, place or area in a manner that complies with the regulations, if any;

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Employer obligations continued from previous page

- (c) post any prescribed signs prohibiting smoking throughout the enclosed workplace, place or area over which the employer has control, including washrooms, in the prescribed manner;
- (d) ensure that no ashtrays or similar equipment remain in the enclosed workplace or place or area, other than a vehicle in which the manufacturer has installed an ashtray;
- (e) ensure that a person who refuses to comply does not remain in the enclosed workplace or place or area; and
- (f) ensure compliance with any other prescribed obligations.

Employees are also protected from sanctions or intimidation for requesting that an employer follow the legislated requirements of the Act

Certain facilities have exemption from the smoke-free workplace restrictions, these facilities include,

- Residential care facilities
- Psychiatric facilities
- Facilities for veterans
- Hotels, motels, inns
- Scientific research and testing facilities



If there is a conflict between the Smoke-Free Ontario Act and any other provision in a bylaw related to the restrictions on smoking, the most restrictive legislation will apply. Municipalities can therefore impose more restrictive provisions on the control of smoking or the exposure to second-hand smoke.

Information packages for workplaces are expected to be available this spring.

For more information on the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, workplaces are invited to contact the Leeds Grenville and Lanark District Health Unit at (613) 345-5685 or 1-800-660-5853 or visit the Ministry of Health Promotion website at www.mhp.gov.on.ca