

Workplace Wellness

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a healthy workplace is a great investment

This issue of Workplace Wellness is brought to you by York Region Health Services. It is available to any workplace in York Region. We encourage you to copy and distribute this newsletter. Our team of health professionals offers information and education on workplace wellness issues at no charge!

Work-Life Balance Initiatives Are Good For Business!



So what are Canadians saying about work-life balance?

"I don't want more money, just less work and less crisis management focused activities."

(Source: Duxbury and Higgins, 2003. Voices of Canadians: Seeking Work-Life Balance)

Although employees have been voicing their concerns for years about rising stress related to balancing work-life-family, it's only now that companies are starting to take stock of the impact it's having on workplace productivity. Over the last decade, employee absences related to conflict in balancing work and life responsibilities have doubled. Employees who are feeling this pressure and stress are not only absent more often, but they report feeling less satisfied with their jobs and less committed to their organizations.

Lowered productivity and absenteeism aren't the only reasons employers need to be addressing work-life conflict. Engaging and retaining skilled employees are becoming costly challenges. Increasing numbers of employees and students seeking employment cite work-life balance as one of their top priorities.

Supporting work-life balance should be viewed as a top priority for companies. Nearly 60% of Canadian employees surveyed reported they are experiencing high levels of "role overload"- in other words too much to do and too little time. One in four experiences high levels of caregiver strain and one in four reports that their work responsibilities interfere with their ability to fulfill their responsibilities at home.

(Source: Higgins, Duxbury and Johnson, 2004. Exploring the Link Between Work-Life Conflict and Demands on Canada's Health Care System)

With an aging population and a large portion of the employed 'sandwich generation' reporting they have

reduced hours or lost income as a result of care giving responsibilities, it's evident that something has to give.

The simple fact is that high work-life conflict impairs health. So why are companies reluctant to buy into family-friendly policies and work-life balance initiatives as part of their workplace wellness planning? Myths that have deterred companies from taking a proactive rather than a reactive approach include:

- Family friendly policies are a women's issue
 - Flexibility=inequality
 - Hours spent on site at work=high productivity
 - It's difficult to prove the impact on the 'bottom line'
- (Source: Social Development Canada)

As the profile of the Canadian family changes, fathers are playing an increasingly active role in child care and family activities. Now almost as many men as women report that they would trade a promotion for a more flexible schedule that would allow them to better balance responsibilities inside and outside of work. However, flexibility cannot be offered in a "one size fits all" model so the employee needs to personally define what balance means for them and be willing to openly communicate this with their employer.

For years we believed that working harder and being more productive meant spending more time at the office. This is often not the case. Employees who are given some control and choice over how and when the work gets done are the ones who express the most satisfaction, loyalty, and willingness to go the 'extra mile' for the company. With lowered work-life conflict, employees can give their best in both arenas.

A Ford Foundation study found that "work-life initiatives were not just a feel-good answer to personal time conflicts but a solution to business problems and one that could provide companies with a competitive edge". Recognizing that this makes good business sense is the first step.

A Few Suggestions for Getting Started

Stand alone policies will not transform your organization. Leading by example encourages the evolution of a new

culture within the organization. Effective work-life balance initiatives include: flexible work arrangements, employee assistance programs, resources for eldercare and childcare services, leaves of absence, and onsite wellness programs.

Having a supportive work environment leads employees to voice improved job satisfaction. Companies that recognize work-life balance as a priority in their organization and implement supportive policies will reap the rewards.

For resources and consultation on family-friendly policies and work-life balance initiatives for your workplace, contact the Workplace Wellness Team at York Region Health Services.

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York Region
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Research in Review

“Effects of High Work-Life Conflict on the Use of Canada’s Health Care System”

Health Canada commissioned Dr. L. Duxbury and Dr. C. Higgins to conduct a national study on work-life balance issues in Canada. Approximately 31,000 Canadians were surveyed. This is the third of six reports.

Health Care Costs and Work-Life Balance

Factor	Description	Cost/year
High role overload	Having too much to do in a given amount of time	\$6 billion
High caregiver strain	Physical, financial, and/or mental stress associated with providing care to a disabled or elderly dependent	\$5 billion
High work to family interference	Work responsibilities interfere with ability to fulfill home responsibilities	\$2.8 billion
High family to work interference	Home responsibilities interfere with ability to fulfill work responsibilities	\$0.5 billion

Recommendations for Employers

1. Analyze benefit costs in order to make a convincing business case for change by assessing the use of EAP, and short and long-term disability claims.
2. Human resources and occupational health and safety groups work together to address these issues as each has a key role to play.
3. Focus on implementing proactive workplace health measures such as cafeteria benefit plans and flexible work arrangements.
4. Link work-life balance initiatives to broader organizational goals such as recruitment.
5. Measure the impact of work-life balance initiatives.
6. Place accountability for workplace health and work-life balance initiatives with senior management rather than human resources.

The full report is available at:
www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/work-travail/report3/index.html

For more information on workplace health issues call **Health Connection 1-800-361-5653** and ask to speak to the Workplace Wellness Team.

Get Active as a Family

Active Living is an opportunity for families to connect and share pleasurable health-enhancing experiences. Research shows physical activity can reduce tension and help individuals cope effectively with stress. Families that are active together stay healthy together. So get moving!

Here are a few suggestions to get you started:

- Go for a walk after supper
- Put on some music and dance with your children
- Go to the neighbourhood playground and help your children to climb and swing
- Teach your children to ride bicycles and then ride with them
- Make a skate date - take the family roller skating, ice skating, in-line skating or skateboarding
- Try mini-golf or golfing
- Get a York Region "Take A Hike" trail guide and hike a trail near you
- Go bowling

Don't forget to stretch before and after doing these activities.

Web site: www.healthcanada.ca/paguide
For more information on Active Living, call **Health Connection 1-800-361-5653**



Parents-to-be in the Workplace... Valuable Investments

Did you know that 8 out of 10 women will become pregnant during their working life? Consider the following information when developing pregnancy friendly policies in your workplace:

- When employees are planning pregnancies or anticipating the birth of a child, changes in health concerns, personal circumstances and work life are inevitable.
- A safe, supportive and healthy work environment can help continued productivity throughout this time and may also provide smooth transitions to and from parental leave.

- Both men and women have unique needs as they prepare themselves to become parents. Understanding these needs is essential to finding the right health programs and policies for your workplace.
- It is important that all levels of your organization support the concept of improving the organizational working environment to create pregnancy friendly workplaces.

For sample policies or more information on developing pregnancy friendly policies in your workplace please contact Health Connection.

Booster Seat Trivia

1. Children using seat belts instead of booster seats are 3.5 times more likely to suffer significant injury, and 4 times more likely to suffer head injury. **TRUE**
2. Booster seats allow the proper positioning of the adult seat belt system over the child's body, preventing injuries to soft abdominal tissue and arteries in the neck. **TRUE**
3. Motor vehicle collisions are the leading cause of death and injury among children and youth. **TRUE**

4. There is a new booster seat law coming into effect in the fall of 2005. **TRUE**

The new law will require children:

- i. weighing between 18-36 kg (40-80 lbs)
 - ii. below the height of 145 cm (4'9")
 - iii. who are 8 years old and younger
- to be in a booster seat until they are ready to ride using an adult seat belt.**

Child seat information and workshops are available to workplaces in York Region. Contact **Health Connection** at 1-800-361-5653 for more information.

Healthy Eating for Families on-the-go!

If you are like most Canadians, you are probably juggling work and family life, and finding it difficult to put aside time to prepare healthy meals and snacks for you and your family. Here are some simple solutions to help reduce the stress around meal preparation and to help put your family on the road to healthier eating:

- **Plan ahead** - It has been shown that people who plan their meals and snacks ahead of time are healthier eaters. Make a grocery list based on your plan. It helps to have a planned menu and ingredients on hand so that you know what you will be preparing when you arrive home from work.
- **Prepare some ingredients ahead of time** - Cut up vegetables and fruit, marinate meats, and cook some foods ahead of time.

- **Go for convenience** - Purchase pre-cut vegetables, pre-washed bagged salads or carrots, and frozen or canned vegetables.
- **Make double batches** - When you have some extra time, prepare larger quantities of recipes and freeze for a quick and easy meal for another day.
- **Stock-up on the essentials** - Keep your refrigerator, freezer and cupboards stocked with items such as meats, pasta, rice, canned tomato sauce, vegetables, peanut butter, whole grain bread, canned tuna or salmon, canned beans, eggs, milk and yogurt.

You can help employees to eat healthy "on-the-go" by calling Health Connection to inquire about **Healthy Measures...in the Workplace**; a Public Health Nutritionist will meet with you to discuss how the program can be tailored to your workplace.



York Region Health Services - Dental Programs for Children

The Children in Need of Treatment (CINOT) Program covers emergency and essential dental care (e.g., restorations, extractions) for children from birth up to and including 13 years of age if all of the following criteria are met:

- the child has an urgent dental condition
- is screened by a York Region Dental Hygienist
- the family does not have dental insurance
- the cost of treatment would present a financial hardship

Treatment is provided by a dentist of the family's choice, who participates in the CINOT Program.

Preventive dental services such as topical fluoride, sealants and cleanings are offered to children from birth up to 17 years of age who would benefit from the services. These services are provided primarily through Health Services dental clinics in Markham, Richmond Hill and Newmarket.

For more information, or to book a screening appointment for your child, please call 1-800-735-6625 or 905-895-4512 and ask to speak to a dental hygienist.

Are You Using Your Medications Safely?

Studies show that older adults use more prescription medications than any other age group. Older adults are also major consumers of over-the-counter medicine and are increasingly using herbal remedies.

As we age, our bodies do not metabolize medications as efficiently. As a result, this makes the older population more prone to medication-related problems. Changes in body weight can influence the amount of medicine that is required. Body circulation may slow down, which can affect how long medication stays in the body and how quickly it gets to the liver and kidneys. Furthermore, the liver and kidneys may work slower; which can affect how the medication breaks down and is eliminated from the body. Due to these changes, medicine may remain in the body longer and create a greater chance of medication interaction.

Mixing alcohol and certain medications can also be dangerous and is known to worsen health conditions such as diabetes, heart or blood pressure problems, liver disease and stomach problems.

To guard against potential problems with medicines, become knowledgeable about your medication, how it makes you feel and possible reactions that can occur. Over-the-counter medications and herbal remedies are equally powerful, so before taking any, seek the advice of a health professional.



Launch of the York Region Heart Health Quilt

The York Region Public Health, Healthy Lifestyles Division, along with the creative and generous contribution of quilters from across York Region has completed a "Heart Health Quilt".

Each quilted square represents a specific Heart Health message. Together they promote living a healthy lifestyle by: being physically active, eating a healthy diet, living tobacco free and managing stress.

For more information on Heart Healthy lifestyles or to book the Heart Health Quilt for your workplace event, call **Health Connection** at 1-800-361-5653.

what's on!

York Region Program Update Meningitis C Immunization Clinics

Free Meningitis C shots are available for individuals born between 1985 and 1990, and those born in 1992. People who meet these age requirements can either get the vaccination at community clinics to be held throughout York Region over the next few months, or from their physician.

For clinic dates and locations, or information about Meningitis C, call Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653.

Upcoming Health Days

MAY/05 - Speech and Hearing Awareness Month www.chs.ca

Apr 23-May 23 • Speech and Hearing Awareness Month

May 1-7 • National Summer Safety Week
www.safety-council.org

May 15 • International Day of Families www.unac.org

JUNE/05 - Seniors Month www.seniors.gc.ca

June 7-13 • Sun Awareness Week www.dermatology.ca

JULY/05 -

July 23 • National Drowning Prevention Day www.lifesaving.org

AUG/05 -

August 1-7 • World Breastfeeding Week www.waba.org.my

August 12 • International Youth Day www.unac.org

Save this date! October 27, 2005

The York Region Annual Workplace Wellness Conference will present work-life balance expert, **Dr. Linda Duxbury**, as keynote speaker at the Richmond Hill Country Club.

Early registration is \$133.75 (\$125 plus GST) which includes meals and materials.

For more information contact Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653.

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Workplace Wellness in Action: Nielsen Media Research



When Mike Leahy, president of Nielsen Media Research, chatted informally with his HR department and staff about wellness programming in the workplace 2 years ago, he had no idea his vision would gain such momentum. Nielsen Media Research employs a workforce of 210 individuals and is a division of VNU Media Measurement and Information.

“able to bring the wellness vision to fruition with the support of senior management”

The champion behind the planning and development process of their wellness program is Maria Hines. Maria feels that she's been “able to bring the wellness vision to fruition with the support of senior management”, specifically Anna Ciciretto, the VP of Human Resources.

They started out with a goal to empower their associates with knowledge. When Maria speaks with employees on a walk-about, she hears associates discussing information learned from nutrition and physical activity workshops and expressing interest and enthusiasm about future learning opportunities. She notices more people using the stairs and parking further away to increase their activity levels during the day. Many employees want to learn how to increase their health and wellbeing, but are not confident about where to find the information, nor have time to find the information themselves. This is where Maria has provided the necessary link.

With a skeleton budget for implementing the wellness program, Nielsen Media Research has managed to maximize their in-house resources as well as incorporate community resources such as

the York Region Health Services Workplace Wellness Program and the Heart and Stroke Foundation.

Maria feels their success thus far can be attributed to several factors:

- 1) Listening to employees to fully understand their needs and interests
- 2) Marketing and promoting upcoming workshops to stimulate interest and participation
- 3) Enlisting the continued involvement and support of senior management

The support of senior management has enabled Maria to meet employee needs and interests in a variety of ways. Past workshops have included such topics as: yoga, heart health, sunsense, time management, retirement planning, gardening, stress management, diabetes prevention, and breast and cervical health. An employee who attended the 7 part series on diabetes prevention reported “I used to think that I ate healthy, but now that I can read labels, I really understand what that means”. Management recognizes this type of programming is significantly beneficial for the employees as individuals as well as the company as a whole.

One of the positive impacts of the program was identified by associate Sandy Brain. She felt that making health and wellness part of the overall plan of the organization through the provision of workshops, supporting work-life balance and providing access to health information on the wellness board as well as the intranet, has increased awareness and created a comfortable environment where people can discuss health in an open forum.

Upcoming initiatives and plans for this year include policy development to support the culture shift in the organization, measuring the impact of the wellness program over the last 2 years, and continuing to provide wellness initiatives that reach the varied needs of their staff.

“Workplace Wellness in Action” is a regular feature of the Workplace Wellness Newsletter. To find out how your workplace wellness program can be featured in a future issue of the newsletter, please call Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653.

