

## what's on!

### Upcoming Health Days

#### January

Alzheimer Awareness Month [www.alzheimer.ca](http://www.alzheimer.ca)

Jan 14-20 National Non-Smoking Week  
[www.cctc.ca](http://www.cctc.ca)

Jan 17 Weedless Wednesday  
[www.cctc.ca](http://www.cctc.ca)

#### February

Heart Month [www.heartandstroke.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.ca)

#### March

National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month  
[www.ccac-acc.ca](http://www.ccac-acc.ca)

National Kidney Month  
[www.kidney.ca](http://www.kidney.ca)

National Nutrition Month  
[www.dietitians.ca](http://www.dietitians.ca)

#### April

Dental Health Month  
[www.cda-adc.ca](http://www.cda-adc.ca)

National Cancer Month  
[www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca)

### Parenting Resources

Are you a parent or guardian of school-aged children? We have tip sheets that may enhance your role as a parent/guardian. The topics include:

• Communication • Discipline that Teaches • Self-Esteem • Positive Body Image • Children and Stress • Staying Healthy • York Region Health Services, Health Connection • Bullying and Violence • Talking to Your Kids about Sexuality

To view these tip sheets go to [www.york.ca](http://www.york.ca). You can download and print these resources by clicking onto Services > Public Health and Safety > School Services.

For more information, please contact Health Connection

Please call Health Connection for more information

# 1-800-361-5653

## Workplace Wellness in Action at Applanix Corporation

How many steps could your company walk in one month? A team of employees at Applanix Corporation in Richmond Hill accumulated 5,656 kilometres during their pedometer challenge this past spring. Their staff of 85 develop, manufacture and market integrated inertial Global Positioning Systems for commercial applications.

Michelle Papanikolov, Director of Human Resources at Applanix, declared the pedometer challenge a success for several reasons but primarily because it has raised awareness of the importance of physical activity and wellness among staff members.

The pedometer challenge and walking program were developed through a partnership between the wellness committee at Applanix and the Active Living Team of the York Region Health Services Department. Applanix provided each participant with a pedometer and prizes were awarded at the completion of the challenge.

Following an internal demographics study that identified a maturing staff and after a few employees experienced concerning health warning signs over a short period, the determination to expand the workplace wellness program at Applanix suddenly became more than a company mandate. Although Applanix provided information and resources to staff in the past, a wellness committee was developed to champion the initiative so that the approach could be more comprehensive. Management is supportive and involved in the program development and participate in the challenges and activities offered to staff.

Michelle identified that feedback from employees as well as increasing health benefits costs have provided sound backing for moving ahead with their wellness program. She states that "our employees are our most valuable asset."

An Employee Survey conducted earlier in the year enabled the wellness committee to strategize for the upcoming year. Some initial steps they've taken include:

We welcome your suggestions, ideas and comments. If you have a topic you would like to read about in a future issue, contact us at [workplace.wellness@york.ca](mailto:workplace.wellness@york.ca)



- continuation of the walking club
- an employee library with wellness resources
- providing fresh fruit once a week to employees
- nutrition education
- healthy choices in vending machines
- a wellness intranet

The key to success according to Michelle is taking a step by step approach. They are following the Corporate Health Model and plan to continue the evolution of their program with the help of the York Region Health Services Workplace Wellness Program.

### Are you getting enough ZZZ's?

Did you know that we spend one-third of our life sleeping? The quality and quantity of your sleep has a direct effect on your daytime performance as well as on your mood. Not getting adequate sleep can lead to mistakes, difficulty focusing and an increased risk of injuries.

So how do you ensure that you get a good night's sleep?

1. Create rituals that help you relax before bed.
2. If you're not asleep within 30 minutes, get up and do something relaxing until you do feel sleepy.
3. Get up at the same time every morning, even on weekends and holidays.
4. Don't read, write, eat, watch TV, talk on the phone, or play cards in bed.
5. Abstain from caffeine after lunch.
6. Avoid alcohol within six hours of your bedtime.
7. Don't go to bed hungry. Enjoy a small snack rather than a large meal near bedtime.
8. Avoid intense exercise within three hours of your bedtime.
9. Address your problems that cause you to worry.

Source: [www.sleepfoundation.org](http://www.sleepfoundation.org)



# WorkplaceWellness

a healthy workplace is a great investment

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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!

## Occupational Health and Safety: Part of the Workplace Wellness Puzzle

Your organization may or may not have the resources to employ a person dedicated to developing and maintaining a workplace wellness program. In either case the Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) professional plays a vital role in the process.

The OHS professional can bring an intimate understanding of the corporate culture, operations and job demands within the organization to the wellness committee table.

Both OHS and wellness programs have the same overall goal – a healthy workforce. A healthy workforce benefits an organization in terms of reduced Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) claims, short and long term disability and drug utilization costs. Increased productivity, employee morale and overall job satisfaction can also be realized.

The success of both programs is reliant on the following factors:

- **Involvement and buy-in from all levels of the organization:** Corporate culture can be defined as "the way we do things around here" and reflects the values and priorities of the organization. If senior management does not fully support the program, the program will not succeed. If front-line staff are not involved in the planning stages, utilization of programs can be predictably low.
- **Effective needs assessment:** What issues are prevalent with respect to OHS and/or wellness? What initiatives will allow employees from all areas of the organization to participate?
- **Policy and goal clarification:** Best practice for both programs includes documentation such as policies (what we want to do) and procedures (how we're going to do it) as well as the establishment of short and long term goals.

- **Acknowledgement of individual health factors:** OHS and wellness professionals (as well as the organization) must acknowledge that there are many contributing factors to health and that health status is consistent between work and home.

- **Program evaluation and long term commitment:** Compliance with OHS legislation is partially judged on the actions taken by an organization to continually improve. Thus, OHS programs need to be evaluated at regular intervals. Though there is currently no legislation with respect to wellness, best practice entails program evaluation. It is important to understand that significant changes in an organization will take about three years to be measurable, so the organization has to be in it "for the long haul". (CCH, 2002)

### How OHS Impacts Wellness:

Employees may be exposed to a variety of workplace conditions that can impact health. Some generic examples include: shift work, physical demands of the job, and work related stress. If workplace hazards are managed through OHS programs, this represents a portion of the wellness program that can benefit the overall health of employees.

### How Wellness Impacts OHS:

Comprehensive wellness programs can ultimately reduce work related injuries and illnesses. If employees are more physically fit through participating in wellness initiatives for example, a decrease in musculoskeletal injuries can be reasonably predicted. Programs geared towards reaching OHS goals in the organization can indeed benefit the employees on a broader level.

Ask your OHS professional to sit at the workplace wellness committee table. They are a central piece of the workplace wellness puzzle!



## what's inside

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Workplace Wellness Program  
Health Connection  
1-800-361-5653

## Research in Review:

### Violence in the Workplace

Workplace violence is a current but often hidden reality. Surprisingly, Canada has the fourth highest rates of assaults and sexual harassment on the job in the world (ILO). Violence in the workplace goes beyond physical assaults to include: all forms of harassment, bullying, intimidation, physical threats, robbery and other intrusive behaviour.

Factors contributing to this issue include, but are not limited to: job loss or insecurity, decreased control over the work environment, stress and mental illness.

Who is at greatest risk for experiencing violence in the workplace? The research points to groups who are interacting with the public in community-based settings and service industries such as:

- health care organizations
- correctional institutions
- social services
- schools
- municipal housing projects
- public works
- retail services

### Workplace Implications:

Despite these concerning facts, it's important to recognize that there is much that can be done to promote a safer workplace environment. Experts suggest the following measures:

1. Identify the problem
2. Develop clear policies and procedures that reflect your unique work environment
3. Implement education and training programs
4. Provide support for victims
5. Mandate reporting and investigation

Workplace violence can cost a business far more than its reputation in the long run.

### Sources:

ILO CUPE  
Healthy Policy = Healthy Profits, 2001  
<http://www.ccohs.ca/products/publications/violence.html>  
[www.workplaceviolence.ca](http://www.workplaceviolence.ca)

## Take a Stretch Break!

Stretching for a few minutes at work each day can help relieve muscle tension, increase flexibility and decrease work-related injuries including back strain from lifting, neck and shoulder pain, and back stiffness. It is also a great way to de-stress and re-energize yourself at work.

Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living recommends accumulating 60 minutes of physical activity every day, including stretching and other flexibility activities, to achieve health benefits.

Why not try the following simple and effective stretches to make physical activity part of your work day? They can be done right at your workstation anytime. Remember to keep these points in mind while stretching:

- Keep your knees slightly bent
- Do not bounce
- Stretch until you feel mild tension
- Hold each stretch for 20-30 seconds
- Remember to breathe slowly
- Warm up your muscles before stretching. Start with a brief walk or marching on the spot
- If you have had recent surgery, muscle or joint problems, talk to your doctor before starting a stretching program

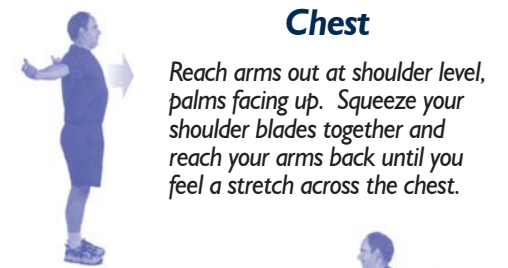
## Young workers have a Passport to Safety

Every day in Ontario, an average of 42 young workers are injured or killed on the job. In fact, more injuries occur to young people in their first month at workplaces than at any other time.

A lost-time injury in Ontario can cost a business in excess of \$59,000 (WSIB/Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, 2002). In addition to job-specific training and supervision, employers can reinforce health and safety knowledge in their young employees through Passport to Safety.

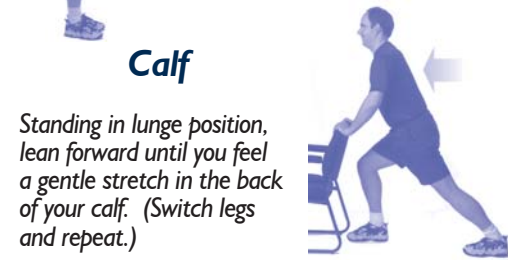
Passport to Safety is a national health and safety awareness test for youth that supports and encourages training to eliminate workplace injuries and deaths. It upholds the vision that our youth enter and then return home from safe workplaces every day, providing students with basic understanding of what they need to know in order to protect themselves from injury at work.

For information about the program and prevention of young worker injuries, visit: [www.passporttosafety.com](http://www.passporttosafety.com)



### Chest

Reach arms out at shoulder level, palms facing up. Squeeze your shoulder blades together and reach your arms back until you feel a stretch across the chest.



### Calf

Standing in lunge position, lean forward until you feel a gentle stretch in the back of your calf. (Switch legs and repeat.)



### Lower Back

Standing with knees bent, place your hands on your inner thighs, lower your head, tuck in your tailbone and curl your spine towards the ceiling.

Adapted with permission from the Brant Healthy Coalition and Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit

For more stretching exercises or information on Active Living in the Workplace, call **Health Connection** at 1-800-361-5653.



## Is Substance Use a Concern For Your Workplace?

Over 15 million Canadians spend approximately half of their waking hours at work (Health Canada 2001). As a result employment becomes a significant part of many people's lives. With so much time and energy spent on the job, it is expected that substance abuse issues may arise and impact individuals in the workplace. Whether it is the sales representative having alcohol at lunch with a client, the individual who takes a cold medication causing drowsiness, or the person who may have problems

associated with illegal drug use; all are examples of substance use and a source of potential concern.

Substance use may affect the health and safety of the individual using, or others who work with them. Workplaces must develop comprehensive strategies to assist both the employer and employee when a substance use issue is identified. Effectively communicated policies coupled with preventative educational opportunities and assistance for

individuals who are experiencing problems with substances will help companies in reducing the impact substance use may have on their safety and liability, while increasing profitability and efficiency.

If you would like further information on the effects of substance use in the workplace including: workshops, consultations, or assistance with policy writing, please contact Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653.

## The Smoke-Free Ontario Act and Your Workplace

As of May 31, 2006 the Smoke-Free Ontario Act (SFOA) came into force. Under the Act smoking is prohibited in all enclosed workplaces and enclosed public places across Ontario in order to protect workers and the public from the hazards of second-hand smoke.

### How the SFOA Affects Workplaces

- Smoking or holding lit tobacco is prohibited:
  - Inside an enclosed workplace
  - Inside a company vehicle
  - On an outdoor patio associated with a cafeteria if the patio has a full or partial roof
- Outdoor smoking shelters are permitted if they have no more than 2 walls and a roof
- Employees who obey the law or seek compliance with the SFOA are offered whistle-blower protection

### Employer responsibilities:

- Ensure employees are aware of law and abide by it

- Prohibit ashtrays
- Post SFOA no-smoking signs at all entrances, exits, washrooms and other appropriate locations

The Tobacco Education and Enforcement Team, York Region Health Services enforces the SFOA and offers educational supports to workplaces. For more information, to order signs or to report a violation call York Region Health Services at 905-762-1282 Ext. 4825

For more information on the Smoke-Free Ontario Act visit: [www.mhp.gov.on.ca/english/health/smoke\\_free/legislation.asp](http://www.mhp.gov.on.ca/english/health/smoke_free/legislation.asp)

## Adults and Booster Shots

Do you remember when you had your last booster shot? Adults need a booster shot every ten years to prevent tetanus and diphtheria. Next time you visit your family physician, ask the following:

1. Am I due for a booster shot?
2. Should I get Adacel™ this time?

Adacel™ is a new vaccine that protects against tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis (whooping cough). The National Advisory Committee on Immunization recommends that all adults receive Adacel™ once as a booster shot, due to the growing number of pertussis cases. In York Region, the number of cases rose from 59 in 2004 to 172 in 2005, with about 25 percent of the cases occurring in adults.

The cost for Adacel™ is covered by many health insurance plans. Check with your benefits provider about your coverage.

For more information on booster shots and Adacel™, please call **Health Connection**

## what's on!

### It's Not Too Late to Get Your Flu Shot

York Region's community flu immunization clinics are underway, and will continue on into early January. If you're unable to attend a York Region clinic, you can visit your family physician to be immunized. Flu season lasts all winter, so it's not too late to protect yourself. Flu shots are particularly recommended if you have a chronic illness or you provide care for someone at high risk of flu-related complications. For more information, please contact **Health Connection** at 1-800-361-5653.

BEAT the Flu BUG  Get your shot!

## Annual Workplace Wellness Conference

The Sixth Annual Conference titled "Leading, Managing and Modeling for Wellness: Creating Sustainable, High-performing Work Environments", facilitated by Nora Spinks, President of Work-Life Harmony Enterprises, was a huge success. Leaders, managers, supervisors and labour representatives from workplaces of all sizes and from all industries across York Region came to learn how work-life quality impacts employee engagement, organizational performance, and ultimately financial performance. We look forward to seeing you at next year's conference being held during Canada's Healthy Workplace Week on October 24th, 2007.