

WORKPLACE **wellness**

ISSUE 35 • SPRING/SUMMER 2010

A healthy workplace is a great investment

This issue of Workplace Wellness is brought to you by York Region Community and 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!

Promoting health across the lifespan



“Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter.”

Mark Twain once said that, “Age is an issue of mind over matter. If you don't mind, it doesn't matter.”

The reality is that as we age, health issues begin to infringe on our overall wellbeing. From a statistical standpoint, arriving at 50, 60 or 70 years of age carries with it a likelihood of a variety of physical and psychological challenges – often dependent on our health behaviours in the previous decades. In a time where people still seek the fountain of youth, we may be overlooking the importance of our own individual power to “age successfully.”

Various studies over the past decade have identified that the effects of both healthy and unhealthy behaviours throughout adulthood are cumulative and impact our

health and wellbeing in later years. The National Population Health Survey findings, which are based on an observation period of eight years, highlight several areas of interest:

- Older adults who smoked, were sedentary or were not in an appropriate weight range for their height were at significantly higher risk for a decline in overall health
- Middle aged individuals with low chronic stress had a better chance of maintaining health than those whose chronic stress was high
- For both middle aged adults and seniors, the presence of arthritis, diabetes and heart disease negatively impacted healthy aging – preventing those diseases before age 65 should be a priority¹

In York Region, baby boomers make up 33 per cent of the population which is higher than the national average.² Employers need to consider that 25 per cent of York Region's workforce will retire in the next 5-10 years leaving a dent in the human capital available to workplaces.³ Retaining older workers and keeping your workforce healthy are proactive steps you can take to lessen the impact of this trend.

When planning your comprehensive workplace health program consider the following:

- Older workers bring a unique perspective and life experience to your work setting
- Many older employees want to continue working and are not ready to retire
- Wellness programs should promote health along all stages of the lifespan

This issue of **Workplace Wellness** provides you with tips for creating an age friendly workplace, information about the York Region Aging Workforce Study Program, a memory boosters quiz and information to enhance employee wellbeing – regardless of age.

Our Workplace Wellness Team can provide consultation and resources to support the development and enhancement of your workplace health promotion program. Contact York Region **Health Connection** at **1-800-361-5653** (TTY 1-866-252-9933).

¹ Laurent, M. et al. *Healthy Aging: Healthy today, healthy tomorrow? Findings from the National Population Health Survey*, Statistics Canada, 2005.

² Statistics Canada – 2006 Population Projections & 2008 Ontario Min. of Finance, ON Population Updates.

³ Aging Workforce Study Program 2009-2010. *Assessing the impact of baby boomers' retirement plans on the York Region economy.*

what's inside

- Promoting health across the lifespan
- Research in review: Canadian attitudes towards health and learning
- Healthy aging and hydration
- Creating an age friendly workplace: 10 tips for employers
- Memory boosters: Test your knowledge
- Upcoming health days
- What's on! – Put your well to the test
- Easing into retirement


York Region

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Research in review: Canadian attitudes toward health and learning



Educating people about health and wellness in the workplace is one component of a comprehensive workplace health promotion program. But how do Canadians prefer to learn about health along the continuum of life?

A recent Canadian Council on Learning survey (*SCAL 2008: Survey of Canadian Attitudes Toward Learning*) discovered a number of interesting facts about the sources of information used by various age groups and the impact of literacy on resources used.

Canadians used an average of six different sources of information within the past twelve months. Not surprising, the majority seek the advice of their family physician (73 per cent) and other health professionals (69 per cent), while still others turn to family and friends (69 per cent). Newspapers and magazines are used by 64 per cent.

Almost two thirds of Canadians reference the internet and over 50 per cent consult books and the television.

(continued in next column)

Research in review continued

However, older Canadians are still more likely to go directly to their family physician rather than consult the internet; while younger individuals prefer to turn to friends, family and the internet.

The study also cited that health literacy skill levels of Canadians are low – that 60 per cent do not have the health literacy skills needed to manage their ongoing health concerns. Individuals with higher levels of education use literacy-dependent sources such as newspapers, magazines, books and the internet more often.

Workplace implications

- Offer health information through a variety of sources
- Use plain language to ensure comprehension by all staff
- Consult with your Workplace Wellness public health nurse for multilingual resource options

For more information, contact York Region **Health Connection** at **1-800-361-5653** (TTY 1-866-252-9933).

Healthy aging and hydration



As we get older our bodies are less able to sense dehydration and send signals of thirst. Signs of dehydration include dry tongue or mouth, irritability and fatigue, dark yellow urine, dizziness, constipation and thirst.

It is important to drink fluids regularly throughout the day, as well as before, during and after exercise. When working in a physical environment or exercising, try to drink ½ cup of water every 20–25 minutes and remember to drink 6–8 glasses of water everyday.

Other things you can drink include:

- 100 per cent fruit and vegetable juices
- Milk
- Fortified soy or rice drinks
- Herbal teas
- Soup
- Decaffeinated coffee and tea

Nothing quenches thirst better than a tall glass of cold water on a hot day! Staying well hydrated when it's hot is definitely important, but hydration is critical to good health in any weather. Water is considered an essential nutrient and is your body's principle chemical component, making up to 60 per cent of your body weight.

WELLNESStip: *Try laughter to boost your wellness!*

Numerous studies have identified the benefits of a regular, hearty laughter session. Laughing boosts your immune system, reduces stress hormone levels, eases tension and pain, helps shift your perspective and connects you with others. Make laughter a priority in your wellness plan.

Creating an age friendly workplace: 10 tips for employers

By 2011, approximately 41 per cent of the working population will be between 45 and 64, compared to 29 per cent in 1991.

- 1. Healthy aging** – arrange wellness days to inform workers about lifestyle choices (nutrition, medication, environmental safety) and work-life balance.
- 2. Dispelling myths** – when employers demonstrate supportive attitudes towards older workers, their abilities and their health and safety, it has a positive impact on everyone's attitudes towards aging.
- 3. Physical activity** – offer incentives for regular exercise which helps maintain muscle and bone strength and flexibility, reducing the risk for injury.
- 4. Open communication** – be aware of different generational values and attitudes. Recognize faulty ideas about aging and their affect on communication.
- 5. Vision protection** – recommend the 20-20-20 rule. Every 20 minutes of screen time, take a 20 second break to blink and focus eyes on something 20 feet away.
- 6. Sound management** – be aware of hearing changes related to aging if the work place uses sound clues for work functions, such as warnings on moving equipment or alarms, and computer signals.
- 7. A matter of timing** – regulating sleep patterns becomes more difficult with age. Older workers may need more recovery time between shifts or extended work days.
- 8. Education and training** – all workers need to upgrade skills on an ongoing basis to be productive in the rapidly changing knowledge economy. Relate new skills to past experience and provide opportunities for practice.
- 9. Ounce of prevention** – ensuring the health and safety of older workers will also make the workplace safer and healthier for all employees.
- 10. Raise awareness** – value and retain older workers by becoming familiar with and sharing knowledge about the stages of aging with all employees.

Sources:

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety. (2002). *Aging Workers*. Retrieved September 21, 2009 from http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/aging_workers.html

Human Resources Development Canada. (2002). *Challenges of an Aging Workforce: An Overview of the Issue*. Retrieved September 21, 2009 from <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/lp/spila/wlb/pdf/overview-aging-workforce-challenges-en.pdf>

Human Resources and Employment. Government of Alberta. (2006). *Safe and Healthy: A guide to managing an aging workforce*. Retrieved on September 21, 2009 from <http://www.alis.gov.ab.ca/pdf/cshop/safehealthy.pdf>

Memory boosters: Test your knowledge

1. A diet high in fruits and vegetables, whole grains and healthy fats can help improve memory. TRUE FALSE
2. Getting enough sleep and managing stress are two healthy habits to boost concentration. TRUE FALSE
3. Trying something new, like using chopsticks or getting dressed with your eyes closed, can improve your concentration and memory. TRUE FALSE
4. Older workers have a more difficult time learning new skills. TRUE FALSE
5. Regular physical activity has no influence on memory. TRUE FALSE

1. TRUE. A diet high in fruit, vegetables, whole grains and healthy fats has been shown to enhance memory by nurturing and stimulating brain function.
2. TRUE. Good sleep habits allow memory consolidation and improve concentration.
3. TRUE. Trying something new is stimulation to the brain and can improve concentration and memory.
4. FALSE. Older workers can learn new skills and they bring their accumulated knowledge and experience to the task.
5. FALSE. Regular exercise increases oxygen to the brain and reduces risk for disorders that lead to memory loss such as diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

For further questions on aging please visit: www.culture.gov.on.ca/seniors; www.msstate.edu/org/gerontology

did you know?

There are currently an estimated 1.4 million caregivers over the age of 45 combining care giving and paid work.

Here are 8 tips for keeping the caregiver healthy:

1. Exercise daily
2. Eat healthy meals and snacks
3. Relax to help you refocus
4. Laugh often
5. Take time for yourself
6. Seek help – don't go it alone
7. Get plenty of sleep
8. Stay organized

For more information, please visit:

www.ccc-ccan.ca

www.culture.gov.on.ca/seniors

UPCOMING HEALTH DAYS

May

Foot Health Awareness Month

www.podiatrycanada.org

National Physiotherapy Month

www.physiotherapy.ca

Speech and Hearing Awareness Month

www.caslpa.ca

May 1-7

National Summer Safety Week

www.hc-sc.gc.ca

May 2-8

Emergency Preparedness Week

www.getprepared.gc.ca

May 2-8

North American Occupational

Health and Safety Week

www.naosh.org

May 3-9

National Mental Health Week

www.cmha.ca

May 10

WHO, Move for Health Day

www.who.int/moveforhealth

May 31

World No Tobacco Day

www.cctc.ca

June

Seniors Month

www.seniors.gc.ca

Stroke Awareness Month

www.heartandstroke.ca

May 30 - June 5

Canadian Environment Week

www.ec.gc.ca

June 2

Clean Air Day

www.cleanairday.com

June 5

World Environment Day

www.unep.org

June 10

National Memory Screening Day

www.alzfdn.ca

what's on!

Put your well to the test



Over 1.3 million Ontarians rely on private wells as a source for drinking water. If you are one of them, put your well to the test.

York Region residents can obtain free bottles for private well water collection at four locations throughout the region. Visit our web site at www.york.ca for information on when and where you can pick up and drop off water samples, as well as answers to frequently asked questions.

Residents can also speak with a public health inspector by calling **York Region Health Connection** at **1-800-361-5653** (TTY 1-866-252-9933) for assistance with interpreting well water results.

Easing into RETIREMENT

For many boomers retirement by age 65 is no longer in their life plan. A recent York Region survey asked boomers aged 50-70 about their retirement plans. The media ideal of freedom 55 does not resonate with 21 per cent of boomers who plan to be working beyond 65 and 25 per cent who still are undecided about their retirement plans. Financial need and liking the work are the key determinants to staying in the workplace.

Boomers don't want to stop working abruptly. Instead 63 per cent of boomers are interested in a phased-in retirement option which offers reduced workloads and responsibilities over time. By easing into retirement, boomers hope to achieve more free time, receive financial rewards and maintain a social network and have less stress. Employers can plan more effectively for retirements by gradually transferring boomers' organizational knowledge and optimizing mentoring.

With an increasing life expectancy and early retirement trend, boomers will have 20 productive years after retirement. Over half of York Region boomers will be seeking second career opportunities to satisfy their



work-life balance and meet the financial realities of living longer.

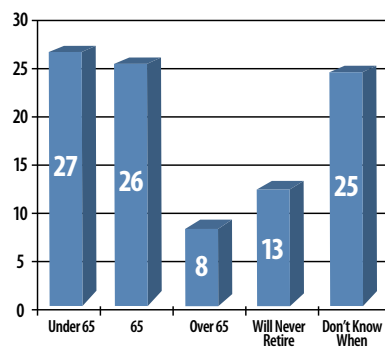
Boomers are interested in pursuing new opportunities that help them to stay active, be involved, keep busy, avoid boredom and supplement their income. Boomers don't want to return to the traditional grind of full time work and cited flexible hours as the key workplace incentive followed by a good salary and reduced hours.

For those boomers still undecided about their future, phased-in retirement may hold the key to finding balance as they transition to retirement. Employers that adapt to boomers' work-life balance needs and develop more flexible, part-time opportunities will benefit from the knowledge, experience and loyalty that older workers can provide.

York Region, with funding from Employment Ontario, provides employers with tools, best practices and aging workforce research. For more information, visit: www.yorkagingworkforce.com

Boomer Retirement Age

21 per cent of York Region Boomers plan to work past age 65



Source: York Region, Boomer Survey, December 2009

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We welcome your suggestions, ideas and comments. If you have a topic you would like to read about in a future issue, or if you would like to receive an electronic copy of this newsletter please contact us at workplace.wellness@york.ca