

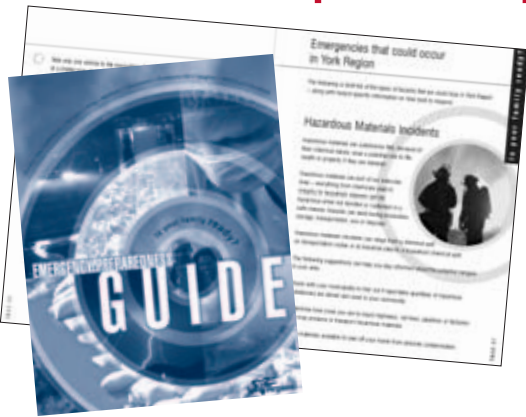
# Workplace Wellness

*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!

## Is Your Workplace Prepared For Action?



Whether your workplace is venturing into pandemic influenza response planning, infection control policy development, or strategizing for business continuity in the event of an emergency, the age old maxim, "Be Prepared", still resonates with a powerful message.

### "Be Prepared"

The potential effect of infectious diseases on the workplace and more broadly, the global community, has never before generated so much media attention and publicity. With SARS, York Region experienced first hand the health care, economic and social impacts of a highly contagious respiratory illness.

History has shown us the far reaching impact that a pandemic influenza is likely to have. Based on a model developed by Dr. Meltzer of the CDC, we can predict that up to 35% of the workforce may be absent due to the effects of the virus on individuals and families. In York Region alone, it's estimated that up to 311,000 people could become infected if there is a pandemic influenza outbreak.

Has your company developed a Business Continuity Plan (BCP)? When your business is reeling from unexpected events, a BCP can guide you in maintaining essential services and business functions.

Has your organization identified:

- Essential services and functions?
- Required staffing needs to keep essential services running?
- Staff skill sets?
- Opportunities for reallocation of staff to fill positions vacant due to absenteeism?

It's equally important to: review current policies and procedures, identify alternate supply sources, establish a communication strategy, and test the plan. Your staff need to "understand the BCP, how and when it's activated, who is responsible for what, and how it fits with your corporate strategy to deal with a pandemic influenza emergency."

(Halton Region Pandemic Influenza Response Plan: A Tool Kit For Business Continuity, 2005)

What can you do to protect yourself and your family? Prevention is the best defense against influenza. All York Region residents should protect themselves and others by:

- Getting a flu shot
- Washing your hands frequently
- Staying home if you are sick
- Following all directions issued by the Health Services Department

(York Region Emergency Preparedness Guide, 2005)

Infection control policies and procedures in your workplace should be addressed in tandem with emergency planning initiatives. The York Region Health Services Workplace Wellness Team can link you with resources to educate your employees on how to reduce the risk of bloodborne diseases at work and to understand infection risks while traveling. Do your employees know the correct hand washing procedures? We've included the 6 essential steps in Research in Review. Read on and find out how you can access a hand washing poster for your workplace.

Consult this edition of **Workplace Wellness** for more information about infectious diseases and minimizing your risk.

To find out what York Region is doing to prepare for a pandemic, visit [www.region.york.on.ca/departments/health+services/default+health+services+department.htm](http://www.region.york.on.ca/departments/health+services/default+health+services+department.htm). Keep your workplace up to date by accessing influenza fact sheets and resources, including the 'Tool Kit for Business Continuity Planning'.

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**York Region**  
 Workplace Wellness Program  
 Health Connection  
 1-800-361-5653

## Research in Review

### Don't Get Caught Dirty Handed!

Sounds simple yet hand washing is the single most important act you can do to prevent getting sick and making others sick. The Centers for Disease Control estimate that 5,000 people die each year from food borne illness. A direct link to many of these deaths is poor hand washing. Hand washing is important for food safety, disease prevention and personal health.

An August 2005 survey, sponsored by the American Society for Microbiology and the Soap and Detergent Association, revealed that while 91% of adults reported they always wash their hands after using public washrooms, only 83% were observed doing so. Respondents also reported washing their hands after using the bathroom in their home (83%) and before handling or eating foods (77%). However, only 42% reported doing so after playing with pets; only 32% wash after coughing or sneezing; finally only 21% wash after handling money.

#### So, when should you wash?

##### Before

- Handling food
- Treating a wound
- Tending to someone who's sick
- Handling contact lenses
- Touching your face

##### After

- Going to the bathroom
- Handling uncooked foods, especially raw meat
- Eating
- Blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- Handling garbage, diapers, or money
- Tending to someone who's sick
- Playing with pets

#### Proper hand washing steps:

1. Wet hands with warm water
2. Apply liquid soap
3. Lather hands for 20 seconds
4. Rinse hands thoroughly
5. Dry hands with paper towel
6. Turn off taps with paper towel

Note: Waterless antiseptic hand hygiene products may be used if hands are not visibly soiled.

**Workplace Implications:** support your staff in this simple yet effective practice by providing adequate supplies, educating them and posting hand washing posters. To get your poster, contact Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653.

## Bloodborne Diseases at Work

**In your workplace, do people know how to protect themselves against bloodborne diseases?**

Unprotected exposure to another person's blood carries the risk of exposure to a bloodborne disease such as hepatitis B, hepatitis C or AIDS. The viruses that cause these diseases are found in the blood of infected people, and can spread during unprotected contact with their blood. This can happen while providing First Aid to an injured co-worker, or when cleaning up a blood spill. It can also happen accidentally from a cut by a blood-contaminated sharp object or a jab from a used needle.

It is important to treat **all** blood as if it could be infected. You cannot tell who has these viruses by how a person looks, and sometimes people do not even know they are infected.

With proper knowledge and protective equipment, your workplace can remain a safe environment.

York Region Health Services can help you to educate your employees on how to handle blood exposures, how to reduce the risks for themselves and others, and where to go for further help or questions. For more information, please call Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653.

### PUT YOUR WORKFORCE ON THE SAME PAGE WITH PASSPORT to SAFETY

York Region Health Services is strongly committed to protecting the health and safety of workers by promoting the Passport to Safety program to local businesses.

Jagger Hims Limited has been a member of Passport to Safety since 2003. Gary R. Hendy, a Director at Jagger Hims Limited, recognizes the value of the program and states "Passport to Safety is a good program and we endorse it for all young workers."

Contact Health Connection to obtain an information package, or log onto [www.passporttosafety.com](http://www.passporttosafety.com).

## Killing Those Disease Causing Bugs in Your Workspace

We have all experienced the co-worker who comes to work coughing and hacking and spreading their disease causing germs in the workplace.

### So how do we protect ourselves and reduce the risk of illness?

Germs are passed from persons infected with a cold, flu or diarrhea. The infected person sheds these germs via coughing, sneezing, blowing their nose, diarrhea or vomiting. When these body fluids are released, environmental contact surfaces such as desks, telephones, computer keyboards, door handles, washrooms and other frequently touched surfaces can become contaminated. Once these contact surfaces become contaminated and a healthy individual comes into contact with the contaminated surface there is a potential for illness.

**By following the tips below, you can protect yourself from those nasty germs and reduce your risk of illness:**

- Wash your hands regularly throughout the day and increase the frequency when you're sick
- Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze
- Wash your hands immediately after coughing, sneezing, blowing your nose or using the washroom



## Tuberculosis in the Workplace

**When a case of Tuberculosis (TB) has been identified in a workplace, York Region Health Services works with employers to identify employees who may have been exposed.**

Tuberculosis is a reportable disease under the Health Protection and Promotion Act. This means that health care professionals, including occupational health nurses, must notify York Region Health Services when they identify a person with TB.

TB is a disease that often attacks the lungs, but can affect any part of the body. Only people with active TB in their lungs can spread it to others. Tuberculosis is not a highly infectious disease. Transmission usually requires close, frequent and prolonged exposure to a source case.

Worldwide, one in three people are infected with TB. In York Region, this number is much lower. In 2005, there were 4.5 cases of active disease for every 100,000 people. If you are concerned about a TB exposure in your workplace, York Region

Health Services will work with you to; maintain confidentiality for the source case, identify those employees who have had significant contact, and arrange TB skin tests for those employees. We can provide onsite screening clinics when large numbers of employees have been exposed. We can also help you educate your employees and develop a TB screening protocol for new employees.

For more information, please call **Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653.**

medication during pregnancy to decrease the risk of passing the virus to their baby.

### 3. Protect yourself.

Learn about preventing and treating infections that could harm your health or a future pregnancy. Make sure your body is healthy before pregnancy.

Hepatitis B is the only STI that can be prevented by immunization. It is preferable to start immunization at least six months before becoming pregnant.

To learn more about STIs or to make a confidential appointment at one of our sexual health clinics, call **Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653.**

## Thinking about having a baby?

**Your sexual health before pregnancy matters.**

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs), if left untreated, can damage your reproductive system and interfere with your ability to become pregnant. Having an STI can harm your baby's health.

You can have an STI without knowing it. STIs are common in men and women, and many people show no signs/symptoms of infection.

### You could be at increased risk for STIs if you or your partner:

- have not always practiced safer sex
- have had sex with other people
- have shared equipment for tattooing, skin piercing, drugs or steroids with other people

### What can you do?

#### 1. Get tested.

Have a regular physical exam, including a pap test. Ask your doctor to test you for STIs, including HIV (the virus that causes AIDS) and hepatitis B.

#### 2. If needed, get treated.

Some STIs can be treated and cured. With good medical care, a woman with an STI can have a healthy baby. Women who have HIV can receive

## Travel Health Quiz

**Do you know how to stay healthy while you're away? Take this quiz to find out.**

- 1 Traveller's diarrhea is only caused by contaminated food. True False
- 2 Always wear protective footwear when out walking on the beach. True False
- 3 Beverages that include alcohol are safe to drink, because the alcohol kills any bacteria. True False
- 4 It is best to swim in fresh water lakes and rivers, rather than the ocean or chlorinated pools when travelling. True False
- 5 Hepatitis A is vaccine-preventable. True False

### Choose the most correct answer:

- 6 Which immunizations are recommended for areas where sanitary conditions are poor?  
(a) Typhoid fever, Hepatitis A  
(b) Rabies, Malaria, Typhoid fever
- 7 When travelling, which foods would be your safest choices at a buffet?  
(a) salad, medium-rare steak, ice cream  
(b) soup, fettuccine Alfredo, cooked carrots, and pastries
- 8 Which items should be included in your luggage?  
(a) extra pair of eyeglasses, anti-diarrheal medication, Deep Woods Off  
(b) spending money, first-aid kit, disinfectant
- 9 Which diseases are spread by mosquitoes?  
(a) typhoid fever, leishmaniasis, shingles, Hepatitis A  
(b) malaria, Dengue fever, Japanese encephalitis, yellow fever

## A N S W E R S

1. **False.** Traveller's Diarrhea is also transmitted by contaminated water, milk, shellfish, and often, through unwashed hands.
2. **True.** Bare feet increase your risk of injury, insect bites, and infection, as well as bites from snakes and scorpions, and puncture wounds from buried, used syringes.
3. **False.** Alcohol-containing beverages have not been proven to reduce the number of harmful bacteria in your drink.
4. **False.** Parasites found in fresh water can penetrate unbroken skin and cause illness.
5. **True.** Hepatitis A can be prevented by a series of two needles, 6 to 12 months apart.
6. a
7. b
8. a
9. b

For more travel health information, please call **Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653.**

## what's on!

### York Region Program Update

#### Tobacco Education and Control Unit

#### Smoke-Free Ontario Act

On May 31, 2006, the Smoke-Free Ontario Act comes into effect. Under this Act, smoking is prohibited in all workplaces and enclosed public places with no exemptions. This will enhance the provisions of the Regional Municipality of York No Smoking By-Law which has prohibited smoking in workplaces in York Region since January 2001. For more information on the Act or to report a violation in the workplace, please contact Health Connection.

#### Child and Family Health

#### We want to hear from you!

If you are a parent of a child less than 6 years of age, living in York Region, we want to hear from you!

Take a moment to complete an online PARENT SURVEY at [www.york.ca](http://www.york.ca) and let us know what programs and services you want to see in York Region.

Call Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653 Monday to Friday between 8:30-4:30. Translation is available.

#### Upcoming Health Days

**MAY/06** Hepatitis Awareness Month [www.healthcanada.ca/hepc](http://www.healthcanada.ca/hepc)  
Medic Alert Month [www.medicalert.ca](http://www.medicalert.ca)  
Speech and Hearing Awareness Month [www.chs.ca](http://www.chs.ca)

May 1-7 • National Summer Safety Week  
[www.safety-council.org](http://www.safety-council.org)

May 7-13 • Emergency Preparedness Week  
[www.emergencypreparednessweek.ca](http://www.emergencypreparednessweek.ca)

May 30-June 6 • North American Occupational Safety and Health Week [www.naosh.org](http://www.naosh.org)

May 16-22 • National Road Safety Week  
[www.tc.gc.ca/roadsafety](http://www.tc.gc.ca/roadsafety)

**JUNE/06** Seniors Month [www.seniors.gc.ca](http://www.seniors.gc.ca)  
Stroke Awareness Month [www.hearandstroke.ca](http://www.hearandstroke.ca)

June 29-July 4 • National Sun Awareness Week  
[www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca)

June 2-23 • Relay for Life [www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca)

June 5-11 • Canadian Environment Week  
[www.ec.gc.ca](http://www.ec.gc.ca)

June 14 • World Blood Donor Day [www.bloodservices.ca](http://www.bloodservices.ca)

Please call Health Connection for more information

# 1-800-361-5653

## Workplace Wellness in Action at B.C. Instruments



For Mary Milner, HR and Safety Assistant at B.C. Instruments, getting a workplace wellness program rolling was one telephone call away. When management offered an opportunity to establish a wellness program, Mary contacted the Workplace Wellness Team at York Region Health Services and requested a consultation meeting. B.C. Instruments (BCI) is a precision machine shop with 144 employees located in the rural community of Schomberg. BCI has been serving customers in the injection molding, medical, aerospace and nuclear industries since 1971.

Previous wellness initiatives at BCI have been primarily geared towards Occupational Health and Safety. The motivation to expand the activities to encompass employee and organizational health originated at both the level of the front line employees and the upper management team. The management team understands that "aside from the obvious high costs associated with health care, insurance, and absenteeism, employees spend so much of their day in the work environment. If we want to hire and keep the best people, workplace wellness becomes part of valuing and respecting our employees."

From our initial meeting, clear steps and goals were established. A workplace wellness committee was formed in July of 2005. Mary facilitated the creation of an employee interest survey using components of the Workplace Tool Kit from the Workplace Wellness Team. Employees had plenty to say and the wellness committee listened!

Next steps included:

- Capturing current and past rates of absenteeism and health benefits costs for future evaluation purposes
- Creating a mission statement for the wellness program
- Establishing short-term, attainable goals to gain momentum, credibility and consistency

- Installing wellness information boards in all three plants
- Dedicating communication space within an internal bi-monthly publication for employee wellness information

Several months were devoted to raising awareness about the newly created wellness program. One particularly valuable marketing strategy was officially launching the wellness program during Canada's Healthy Workplace Week. Wellness gift bags were presented to every staff member. Simple, inexpensive ideas were incorporated including: bottled water, a small bottle of hand sanitizer, The Heart Smart Fitness Wheel, and a Health Connection bookmark.

Wellness committee members have noticed staff talking about the monthly health themes and picking up related resources. Individuals are also taking advantage of the healthier food choices offered at meetings, during monthly employee events, from vending machines, and additionally, from the catering truck.

In the upcoming months, BCI will be outlining long-term goals for their workplace wellness program and establishing policies to support the enhanced nutrition choices made available to staff. Ongoing consultation and support from the York Region Health Services Workplace Wellness Team is incorporated into their work plan. Personal success stories will continue to be highlighted in their internal bi-monthly publication as many employees identified the positive influence of their peers on their own health practices.

Presently the committee is gearing up for the education component of their wellness program. Walking clubs, pedometer challenges and nutrition information sessions are on their radar. When asked why Mary believes all of this will make a difference, she simply states "self-awareness and knowledge can be a powerful combination."

"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.

**York Region**