

# WORKPLACEwellness

ISSUE 36 • FALL 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!

## Calling all parents!



The connecting forces between work and family life are undeniable. Working parents walk a tightrope to balance responsibilities on both the work and home fronts and we are now just beginning to understand the true implications for both the workplace and the family.

An Angus Reid survey noted that 40 per cent of Canadians strongly agreed that families are in crisis (1994). This may come as no surprise but how does work factor into this?

The family work week has undergone significant changes over the past 30 years. According to Statistics Canada, the number of dual earner couples rose from 43 per cent to 68 per cent between 1976 and 2008. In addition, the combined weekly work hours increased from about 58 to 65 in the same time period. In dual earner families with young children at home, one in four men and one in three women reported feeling extremely time stressed.<sup>1</sup>

Research has pointed to lowered physical and psychological health and wellbeing among parents and their children when work/family

conflict escalates<sup>2</sup>. For the workplace, this can result in lowered productivity and dollars lost to absenteeism and stress related illness. Many experts agree that if nothing is done, the organizational, human and social costs may be profound.<sup>3</sup>

Families and workplaces are stepping up to the challenge and recognizing it “takes a village” to make a difference. Promoting a culture of flexibility and support is key according to leading edge organizations. Options for workplaces may include developing work-life balance policies and family friendly initiatives such as flextime and telework as well as promoting a corporate culture that supports the uptake of these options.

Addressing workload issues and the psychosocial health of your workplace are equally important. Employees are encouraged to embrace policies and initiatives that support family/work-life balance. Families may find it helpful to reassess their priorities, practise effective time management, build a social support network, and protect time dedicated to family activities.<sup>4</sup>

For additional resources to support healthy workplaces, contact your Workplace Wellness public health nurse by calling York Region **Health Connection** at **1-800-361-5653** (TTY 1-866-252-9933) or visit:

[www.york.ca/workplacewellness](http://www.york.ca/workplacewellness)

[www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca)

Canada's Healthy Workplace Month is  
October 4<sup>th</sup> to October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2010  
For more information visit:  
[www.healthyworkplacemonth.ca](http://www.healthyworkplacemonth.ca)

## what's inside

- Research in review: A good night's sleep can help you live longer
- Did you know?
- Eight tips for fostering resiliency in children and youth
- Workplaces going to the dogs!
- Free parenting workshops near you!
- Upcoming health days
- Did you know?
- What's on!
- Transition to parenting
- It's against the law to smoke. . .
- Get ready for October. . .
- Workplace wellness in action: The Town of Richmond Hill

  
**York Region**

Workplace Wellness Program  
**Health Connection**  
**1-800-361-5653**  
(TTY 1-866-252-9933)

<sup>1</sup> Marshall, K. Statistics Canada. Perspectives. The family work week. (April 2009)  
<sup>2</sup> Barrette, J. The Vanier Institute of the Family. Contemporary Family Trends. Work/family balance: What do we really know?, p.3.  
<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, 15.  
<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, 16.

## *Research in review: A good night's sleep can help you live longer*



For an estimated 3.3 million Canadians a good night's sleep is hard to find.

A recent study at Britain's UCL Medical School demonstrated a link between the amount of sleep an individual receives and their lifespan.

The study, conducted over eight years, found that those who slept six to eight hours nightly but decreased their sleep habits over the course of the study had a 110 per cent greater risk of dying of heart disease.

Sleep is the body's opportunity to rest and repair. However, the study also found that those who slept nine or more hours were at the same risk of dying of other health complications.

The study concluded that six to eight hours of sleep is ideal without the use of chemical sleeping aids.

*(continued on the right column)*

## Workplaces going to the dogs



Many dog owners consider their dogs as family members. Letting your workplace "go to the dogs" can increase employee morale and retention!

One in five U.S. workplaces allows employees to bring their pets to work. There are some things to consider when allowing pets in the workplace and having a policy in place can alleviate many concerns.

Consider the benefits:

- Better retention and recruitment of high quality staff
- Health benefits for employees includes stress reduction, improvement in mood and well-being, better colleague camaraderie
- Decreased absenteeism, increased employee and pet happiness

If you are interested in more information on dogs in the workplace or creating a dog-friendly policy, visit [www.dogfriendly.com](http://www.dogfriendly.com).

**Source:**  
APPA, 2006

## *Research in review* continued

Some simple steps to ensure a better night's sleep:

- Keep a regular sleep cycle
- Create a cool, dark and peaceful sleep environment
- Make exercise part of your day
- Make a to-do list before going to bed
- Avoid caffeine, nicotine and alcohol before bed
- Limit the use of cell phones, televisions and computers prior to bedtime

## *Implications for the workplace*

- Consider sleep when developing preventative programs and occupational rehabilitation including voluntary screening
- Employ measures to create a positive psychosocial work environment
- Offer employees education on sleep disorders and optimal sleep practices
- Hold mandatory sleep education seminars for shift workers

**Source:**

Ferrie JE; Shipley MJ; Cappuccio FP; Brunner E; Miller MA; Kumari M; Marmot MG. A prospective study of change in sleep duration; associations with mortality in the whitehall II cohort. *SLEEP* 2007;30(12):1659-1666.

## did you know?

The CINOT (Children in Need of Treatment) Dental Program has now expanded to include high school students age 17 and under.

For more information, please contact York Region *Health Connection* at 1-800-361-5653 (TTY: 1-866-252-9933) or visit [www.york.ca/teeth](http://www.york.ca/teeth).

## Fostering resiliency in children and youth

Resilient children and youth can meet challenges, adapt to changes and thrive in a variety of everyday situations. The more positive experiences they have in their lives, the greater the likelihood they will develop into successful individuals.

Working parents may find it hard to find quality time with their children and youth. Here are some tips for parents to foster resiliency and make time together more meaningful and enjoyable.

- Show your children unconditional love and affection with lots of hugs
- Praise your children by complementing the good things they do
- Nurture your children by seeking and respecting their opinion
- Set clear boundaries and expectations - be consistent
- Eat together as a family whenever possible
- Involve your children by asking for their help when planning an event or family outing
- Encourage and support your children - help them set and achieve their goals

- Develop your children's natural curiosity and skill through safe and meaningful exploration of the world around them

Source:  
[www.search-institute.org](http://www.search-institute.org)

## did you know?

Approximately one in four Canadian children has a behaviour or learning problem when they enter Grade 1. (Council for Early Child Development)

- Use Nipissing District Developmental Screens™ (NDDS™) regularly. They are developmental checklists that promote an awareness of healthy child development and provide suggested age related activities
- NDDS™ are free and available in many different languages for all children in York Region birth to six years of age
- For more information, visit [www.ndds.ca](http://www.ndds.ca) or call York Region Health Connection at 1-800-361-5653 (TTY: 1-866-252-9933)
- For additional healthy child development information, visit [www.york.ca/parenting](http://www.york.ca/parenting)

A child who receives help early will have a better foundation for lifelong learning!

## Free parenting workshops near you!

Are you a parent or caregiver living or working in York Region and have a baby under one year of age? If so, come to a free parenting workshop near you!

Workshop topics include:

**Adjusting to the first year of parenthood** - An interactive and supportive class where we will talk about the ups and downs of parenthood, what is helpful, and share solutions to common challenges that many parents experience.

**Attachment parenting** - Early experiences help to shape the way your child learns, thinks, and behaves now and in the future. In this workshop, learn more about what you can do to make a difference.

**Growth and development** - Learn more about what to expect in your baby's first year, and what you can do to help your baby grow and develop.

**Infant sleep** - Learn more about your baby's developing sleep patterns and what you can do to help your baby sleep.

**Positive discipline** - Learn more about positive parenting strategies that match your child's stage of development, individual personality and various needs.

Parenting workshops are facilitated by Public Health Nurses at various locations in York Region. For more information, please contact York Region **Health Connection** at **1-800-361-5653** (TTY 1-866-252-9933).

## did you know?

Families who prepare and eat meals together have healthier eating habits. Get your family involved in meal preparation and clean up. This will save time and will teach your children valuable life skills. Younger children can help set the table and older children can help with food preparation.

For more information, please call:

York Region **Health Connection** at  
**1-800-361-5653** (TTY: 1-866-252-9933)

## UPCOMING HEALTH DAYS

### September

**Breakfast for Learning Month**  
[www.breakfastforlearning.ca](http://www.breakfastforlearning.ca)

**September 25 Terry Fox National School Run Day**  
[www.terryfox.org/SchoolRun](http://www.terryfox.org/SchoolRun)

### October

**Autism Awareness Month**  
[www.autismsocietycanada.ca](http://www.autismsocietycanada.ca)

**Breast Cancer Awareness Month**  
[www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca)

**Healthy Workplace Month**  
[www.healthyworkplacemonth.ca](http://www.healthyworkplacemonth.ca)

**International Walk to School Month**  
[www.iwalktoschool.org](http://www.iwalktoschool.org)

**Learning Disabilities Awareness Month**  
[www.ldac-acta.ca](http://www.ldac-acta.ca)

**October 17-23 National School Safety Week**  
[www.safety-council.org](http://www.safety-council.org)

**October 10 World Mental Health Day**  
[www.who.int](http://www.who.int)

### November

**Diabetes Month**  
[www.diabetes.ca](http://www.diabetes.ca)

**November 14 World Diabetes Day**  
[www.diabetes.ca](http://www.diabetes.ca)

**November 20 National Child Day**  
[www.phac-aspc.gc.ca](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca)

### December

**The Lung Association's Christmas Seal Campaign**  
[www.lung.ca](http://www.lung.ca)

**December 1 World AIDS Day**  
[www.worldaidsday.org](http://www.worldaidsday.org)

## what's on!

### Transition to parenting

Transition to Parenting programs are offered in the York Region community.

These weekly educational and support groups are for prenatal and postnatal women and their families. Strategies for coping with postpartum mood disorders, including anxiety and depression, are discussed.

The purpose of the program is to increase knowledge, increase confidence, share experiences, develop coping skills for parents, enhance positive parenting relationships and build healthy families.

### It's against the law to smoke in a workplace, including those on wheels

In Ontario, it is against the law to smoke or hold lit tobacco in an enclosed workplace. This includes vehicles supplied by an employer. The Tobacco Education and Control Team now have signs for workplace vehicles and posters for your message boards.

### October is breast and cervical cancer awareness month

The Early Detection of Cancer program has a toolkit that will help you promote cancer prevention in your workplace. A recent survey of workplace users concluded that 80 per cent find the toolkit helpful in raising awareness. The most popular items are the quizzes, newsletter items and printed materials.

For information or resources on any of these topics, please contact **York Region Health Connection** at **1-800-361-5653** (TTY 1-866-252-9933).

## Workplace wellness in action: The Town of Richmond Hill



The Town of Richmond Hill ("the Town") started its Workplace Wellness Program in 1998 by offering their employees subsidized fitness memberships at local community centres. The focus then was to educate employees on the benefits of health and wellness as a way to help lower the Town's benefit program costs.

As the wellness program matured and the direction shifted to investing in their employees, even greater financial savings were realized. Drug claims were reduced by 3.9 per cent in 2007-2008, absenteeism was 30 per cent lower than the national average in 2008 and, in 2009, cost avoidance via the personal health assessment program was an incredible amount - over \$34,000.

Debra Wight, Manager of Employee Health, Safety and Benefits for the Town, is responsible for overseeing the wellness program for approximately 625 staff. With her leadership, the Town took the wellness program one step further in 2005.

The mission statement was revised to include empowering employees and their family members to continuously improve their overall health and well-being. As Debra put it, "You can't have a successful organization without happy employees and you can't have happy employees without a supportive organization."

Several family-focused programs and policies are in place at the Town that promote work-life balance. These include telework, flexible/compressed work hours and services provided through EAP to meet the needs of employees at different life stages. In addition, employees participate in on-site massage therapy clinics, health screening clinics and various competitions to boost physical fitness and connectivity at work such as the "Amazing Race" and "Fit for Heart" and "Big Bike" fundraising events. The Wellness Newsletters highlight a quarterly "wellness champion" success story. According to Debra, the on-site fitness program is extremely successful with 18 classes of yoga, pilates and tai chi held at various worksites each week.

Over the years, health promotion has been incorporated into the Town's workplace culture. It's common to see healthy foods served at meetings, employees having a walking meeting near the Town building and groups walking during their lunch hour. Employees at the Town of Richmond Hill actively participate in their wellness program because they recognize how much they are valued by their workplace.

YORK REGION  
**Health Connection**  
Health Information • Education • Counselling  
**1-800-361-5653**  
TTY 1-866-252-9933

**York Region**