

SUMMER 2011

# HEALTH ISSUES

IN THE WORKPLACE

WATCH  
*Your*  
MOUTH

feature on page

3

Keepin' it  
**Clean**

Nutrition  
Tooth  
**DECAY**

5



# WATCH your MOUTH



Your oral health can affect more than just your teeth. It can also affect your overall health. One of the key factors in staying healthy is visiting your dentist or dental hygienist for regular check-ups and cleanings.

For many of us, visiting the dentist is scary. Even the most fearless people can be nervous about a trip to the dentist. What makes the situation even worse is that many of us may have had one or more negative experiences while visiting the dentist when we were younger. Over the years, the field of dentistry has improved greatly. Indeed, dental professionals have made it their mission to make procedures more comfortable for patients of every age. Dentists don't want us to be afraid of them. They want to provide the best possible health outcomes for their patients with a minimal amount of discomfort.

The *Watch Your Mouth* newsletter covers a broad selection of topics on oral health. What we eat, our lifestyle choices, and how we take care of our teeth can have a huge impact on our oral health and our overall well-being. Fluoride in community tap water, oral hygiene, and oral cancers are just some of the topics that will be covered. Each section will include information and tips to help the entire family take care of their oral health now and into the future.



# Chew

Your Way to a  
Healthy  
Smile



Sugar-free gum is used by millions of Canadians, with national annual sales of \$378 million (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2008). While many people chew gum to freshen breath, did you know that sugar-free gum also has many oral health benefits? For example, sugar-free gum:

- Helps prevent cavities.
- Helps reduce plaque.
- Neutralizes acids that form in the mouth after eating.
- Helps rebuild enamel to strengthen teeth.
- Helps clear food debris from the mouth.
- Relieves dry mouth discomfort.
- Helps whiten teeth by reducing and preventing stains (Leveille et al., 2008).

## Saliva...more than just drool

Saliva is key to achieving good oral health. Saliva is made up of over 99% water, with the other 1% made up of organic molecules, mainly proteins, and electrolytes. Chewing gum after eating helps increase saliva production and overall salivary flow (up to 10 times the normal rate). Saliva helps to wash away and neutralize the acid caused by bacteria in plaque. This acid is the main cause of tooth decay and bad breath. Saliva also contains calcium, phosphate, and fluoride—the same minerals found in tooth enamel. Therefore, increased saliva production can also help repair early decay and strengthen tooth enamel (Leveille et al., 2008).



**Did you know?**  
Chewing gum while peeling onions can help keep you from crying. The reason? Chewing makes you breathe through your mouth, which is said to keep the tear-causing fumes away from your eyes. Give it a try—what have you got to lose?

## Some Things to Chew On Before You Chew

While chewing gum is a great addition to your overall oral hygiene routine, there are a few things to consider. Chewing gum that contains sugar can actually be harmful to your teeth. Sugar fuels the acid-producing bacteria in your mouth that lead to decay, cavities, and bad breath. Check the package carefully before you buy to make sure it's sugar-free (Dental Health Magazine, 2008). While reading the labels, you may notice a warning about possible laxative effects. When some sweeteners such as maltitol and sorbitol are used in chewing gum, they may cause gas and bloating and produce a mild laxative effect, especially when used in excess. If you experience gastrointestinal discomfort, you may want to scale back the amount you chew or take a break.

### Key References

- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. (2008). *Market Brief: The Canadian market for confectionary gum products*. Retrieved March 3, 2011 from, <http://www.ats.agr.gc.ca/can/4500-eng.htm>.  
Dental Health Magazine. (2008). *Benefit of chewing gum on teeth health*. Retrieved March 2, 2011 from <http://worldental.org/gums/benefit-of-chewing-gum-on-teeth-health/39/>.  
Leveille, G., Alcantara, E., McMahon, K., & Zibell, S. (2008). Benefits of chewing gum. Oral health and beyond. *Nutrition Today*, 43(2), 75-81.



# Keepin' it Clean



Having good oral hygiene means keeping your teeth clean by brushing and flossing daily. Good oral hygiene is important at all stages of life. In fact, it's your first line of defense against tooth decay and gum disease. That's why it's so important to understand how to take care of your teeth and gums. Here's a brief description of the dental tools you need to include in your cleaning routine and how to use them:



**Toothpaste:** Health Canada (2009) recommends that adults use a pea-sized amount of fluoridated toothpaste. Toothpaste should never be swallowed.

**Toothbrush:** The toothbrush you choose should have a small head, soft bristles, and fit comfortably in your hand. Teeth are to be brushed at least twice a day for two to three minutes to remove plaque. Your toothbrush should be held at a 45-degree angle, with the brush bristles pointing upwards for upper teeth and downwards for bottom teeth. Start your brush stroke where the tooth and gum meet. Softly brush your teeth back and forth in a small section, then brush up or down in short strokes to sweep away the plaque; continue this process for all teeth on the outside and inside of your mouth. Also, clean the chewing surfaces of your teeth with short, sweeping strokes. Brush your tongue as far back as you can to help remove bits of food that can attract bacteria and cause bad breath.

After you've finished brushing, rinse your toothbrush and let it air-dry. Keep it stored in an upright position away from other toothbrushes; never share your toothbrush. You should replace your toothbrush every three to four months or earlier if the bristles look worn or bent.

**Floss:** Floss and dental tape can be used to clean between your teeth. Dental tape is similar to floss but it's flatter and wider. The Ontario Dental Association (2010) states that "flossing helps you clean 35% more tooth surface than you would by

just brushing your teeth". As a result, it's important to floss every day. Be sure to read the *Periodontal Disease: It's Not Just About Your Gums* Personal Health Guide for a step-by-step review of how to floss your teeth properly.

**Oral Rinses:** Oral rinses are liquids that you swish in your mouth, but never swallow. Some rinses fight bad breath, while others help prevent plaque and gingivitis. Oral rinses are no substitution for flossing or brushing and they should not be given to children, especially those who already drink fluoridated water.

Daily oral hygiene is an important part of your overall oral health. Regular dental checkups are also important. Dental health professionals are able to check for gum disease and other conditions that only they can detect. Checkups should, on average, happen every 6 months, but may be more or less frequent depending on your needs. For more information about what happens at a dental checkup, please visit the Canadian Dental Association website: [www.cda-adc.ca/en/oral\\_health/visiting/check\\_up/index.asp](http://www.cda-adc.ca/en/oral_health/visiting/check_up/index.asp)

Taking good care of your teeth and gums by brushing, flossing, and visiting a dental health professional regularly, can help keep your mouth healthy and your smile bright.

Key References  
Ontario Dental Association. (2010). *Personal oral care*. Retrieved March 2, 2011, from <http://www.youroralhealth.ca/personal-oral-care.html>  
Health Canada. (2009). *Brushing and flossing*. Retrieved March 3, 2011, from [http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/oral-bucco/care-soin/techniques-eng.php#floss\\_soie](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/oral-bucco/care-soin/techniques-eng.php#floss_soie)



# Oral Cancer in Canada

## KNOW YOUR RISK

If caught early, oral cancer has an 80% to 90% survival rate

(Oral Cancer Foundation, 2011).

Oral cancer is a disease that occurs when abnormal cells in the mouth or on the lips grow uncontrollably, forming small tumours. These tumours can be benign (non-cancerous) or malignant (cancerous). Malignant tumours are serious and need immediate attention as they can spread cancer to other areas of the body. In 2011, an estimated 3 600 Canadians will be diagnosed with oral cancer. Sadly, 1 150 individuals diagnosed with oral cancer are expected to die this year (Canadian Cancer Society's Steering Committee, 2011). If caught early, oral cancer has an 80% to 90% survival rate (Oral Cancer Foundation, 2011).

### Are you at risk?

According to Health Canada (2009) there are several factors that put you at high risk for oral cancer. The use of tobacco products (e.g., cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, chewing tobacco, snuff) and drinking moderate to high amounts of alcohol significantly raises your risk for oral cancer. When tobacco and alcohol use are combined, the risk is even higher. However, about 25% of oral cancers are found in people who don't smoke or drink. These oral cancers could be caused by exposure to the human papillomavirus (HPV) through oral sex or by overexposure of the lips to ultraviolet rays from tanning lamps or the sun. Also, individuals over 40 years of age are at higher risk due to a longer exposure time to risk factors (e.g., tobacco, alcohol, sun, HPV).

#### Key References

Canadian Cancer Society's Steering Committee on Cancer Statistics. Canadian Cancer Statistics 2011. Toronto, ON: *Canadian Cancer Society*. Retrieved May 24, 2011, from [http://www.cancer.ca/Canada-wide/About%20cancer/~/\\_media/CCS/Canada%20wide/Files%20List/English%20files%20heading/PDF%20-%20Policy%20-%20Canadian%20Cancer%20Statistics%20-%20English/Canadian%20Cancer%20Statistics%202011%20-%20English.aspx](http://www.cancer.ca/Canada-wide/About%20cancer/~/_media/CCS/Canada%20wide/Files%20List/English%20files%20heading/PDF%20-%20Policy%20-%20Canadian%20Cancer%20Statistics%20-%20English/Canadian%20Cancer%20Statistics%202011%20-%20English.aspx)

Health Canada. (2009). *Oral Cancer*. Retrieved April 4, 2011, from <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/oral-bucco/disease-maladie/cancer-eng.php>

Oral Cancer Foundation. (2011). *The Oral Cancer Foundation*. Retrieved April 7, 2011 from <http://oralcancerfoundation.org>

### Common signs of oral cancer

(Health Canada, 2009)

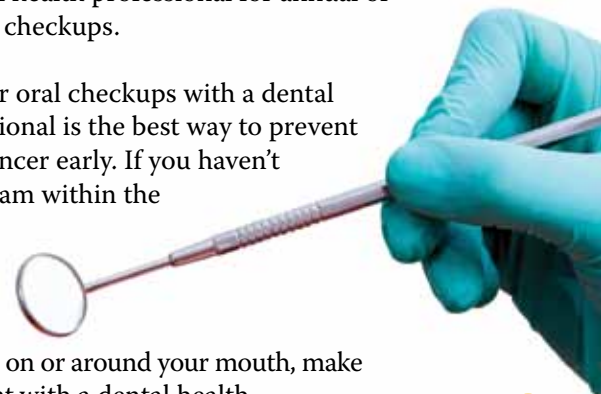
- A sore in the mouth or on the lips that doesn't heal within two weeks.
- White or dark red patches on the tongue, gums, or cheek.
- Swelling or a lump in the neck, on the tongue, or on the lip.
- A sore throat with difficulty swallowing.
- Bleeding or pain in the mouth.

### Prevention is best

The good news is that oral cancer is largely preventable. There are several important steps that you can take to prevent oral cancer and reduce your risk:

- If you use tobacco products, quit or cut down. Seek help at [www.smokershelpline.ca](http://www.smokershelpline.ca)
- If you drink alcohol, drink small amounts. Follow the *Low-Risk Drinking Guidelines* at [www.lrdg.net](http://www.lrdg.net)
- If you engage in oral sex, use a dental dam or wear a condom.
- Protect your lips. Use a lip balm with sunblock of SPF 30.
- Be aware of, and seek help for, changes in your mouth and on your gums, lips, tongue, and face.
- Visit a dental health professional for annual or semi-annual checkups.

Having regular oral checkups with a dental health professional is the best way to prevent or find oral cancer early. If you haven't had an oral exam within the last year, or if you're concerned about a sore, mark, or lump on or around your mouth, make an appointment with a dental health professional immediately.





# Nutrition and *Tooth Decay*

What we eat and drink can have a positive and negative impact on our oral health. Tooth decay is a chronic disease that affects many of us throughout our lives. Preventing tooth decay early can help prevent pain, discomfort, and costly dental treatments now and later in life. Tooth decay is considered one of the most preventable forms of disease, yet Health Canada (2010) reports almost 60% of Canadian children have a cavity or damaged tooth before the age of 12.

## What is Tooth Decay?

Tooth decay is damage to teeth, more commonly known as cavities. It's caused by bacteria or germs found in the plaque in our mouths. Plaque is the sticky film that makes teeth feel 'fuzzy' after eating sugary foods or before brushing teeth, and is a good home for bacteria. Bacteria feed off the sugars from the food and drink we consume. When bacteria digest these sugars, they produce and release an acid in the mouth. This acid damages the outer layer (i.e., enamel) of our teeth. Damaged enamel can lead to cavities and, if left untreated, can cause more serious damage.

Every stage of life has a different oral health concern. The biggest concern for babies and toddlers is bottle feedings. Even though an infant may not have teeth yet, the risk of developing cavities in future teeth is increased if their bottle contains juice or milk. Both juice and milk contain natural sugars, which will cause the bacteria in a child's mouth to produce tooth-damaging acid. When we sleep, we produce less saliva that breaks down acids. This combination of less saliva and the presence of a sugary liquid coating the mouth for a few hours can lead to tooth decay.

A child's first set of teeth will be soft, porous, and can damage easily. Infants and toddlers need vitamins and minerals to form durable enamel and strong bones. Following *Canada's Food Guide* will help ensure that a child is eating well. The Ontario Dental Association (ODA) offers some examples of healthy snacks. These include fresh fruit, vegetables, and small amounts of cheese or nuts, rather than dried fruit, granola bars, or crackers. Fruits, veggies, and cheeses are great choices because they will not stick to teeth, they will help prevent cavities by neutralizing acids created by bacteria, and they will also reduce the amount of sugary snacks a child eats. These same tips are recommended for children starting to lose their baby teeth, as new permanent, adult teeth are still soft and porous like baby teeth.

Adults face many of the same issues as children when it comes to their teeth. The main difference is that as teeth get older, the enamel starts to wear down over time. Many of us enjoy the occasional cola or a morning glass of juice or coffee, but these drinks have a lower pH level, meaning they're more acidic. Acid wears down tooth enamel over time, which leads to sensitive teeth, cavities, and even tooth loss. If good dental hygiene is not practised, the acids can also cause severe dental erosion. Dental erosion weakens enamel so much it can damage the deeper layers of teeth (i.e., dentin).

## Solutions

There are many things we can do to help prevent tooth decay. One easy step is to set positive examples of healthy eating and dental hygiene right from the start. The ODA and the Canadian Dental Association (CDA) have great tips for everyone:



## Babies, from birth to three years:

- Wipe a baby's gums with a clean wet cloth after feedings.
- If a baby goes to sleep with a bottle, fill it with water only.
- If a child usually falls asleep during feedings, brush his/her mouth or teeth before feedings - to reduce bacteria in the mouth.
- Once a child gets his/her first teeth, start brushing using a long-handled, soft-bristled, child's toothbrush with water only. Once the child is able to spit, you may apply a light smear of children's toothpaste on the brush. Always consult with your pediatrician or dentist before using fluoride-based toothpaste. When the primary molar teeth begin to show, parents should floss their child's teeth once a day.
- Family members can transmit cavity-causing bacteria to children, so it's best to avoid sharing toothbrushes, eating utensils, and cups.
- The ODA and the CDA recommend a first visit to the dentist by the child's first birthday.

## Children three years to adults:

- Follow *Canada's Food Guide* for healthy eating tips ([www.canadasfoodguide.net](http://www.canadasfoodguide.net)).
- Use a straw to drink juice and soft drinks and don't swish the liquid in your mouth.
- Avoid drinking sweetened or acidic drinks.
- Acidic drinks (e.g., coffee, orange or grapefruit juice, colas) temporarily weaken enamel. Wait one hour before brushing teeth to help prevent damage caused by the toothbrush.
- Rinse your mouth with water or chew sugarless gum after eating or drinking if you are unable to brush and floss.
- For more information on sugarless gum, read the *Chew Your Way to a Healthy Smile* article in this newsletter.

Eating a variety of food from the four food groups will provide you with all of the vitamins and minerals you need for good dental health. Here are some examples:

**Calcium:** yogurt, milk (including chocolate milk), fortified soy, nut or rice milk, cheese.

**Phosphorous:** milk, cheese, yogurt, whole grain breads, eggs, beef, chicken, turkey, fish.

**Vitamin A:** orange, yellow, and red veggies and fruit (e.g., carrots, sweet potato, squash, mango, red pepper).

**Vitamin C:** citrus fruit, sweet pepper, guava, papaya, kiwi, broccoli, cabbage.

**Vitamin D:** milk, fortified soy, nut or rice milk, eggs, tuna, salmon, trout, mackerel.

**Fluoride:** fluoride toothpaste or tap water if you live in a community with fluoride in the water system.

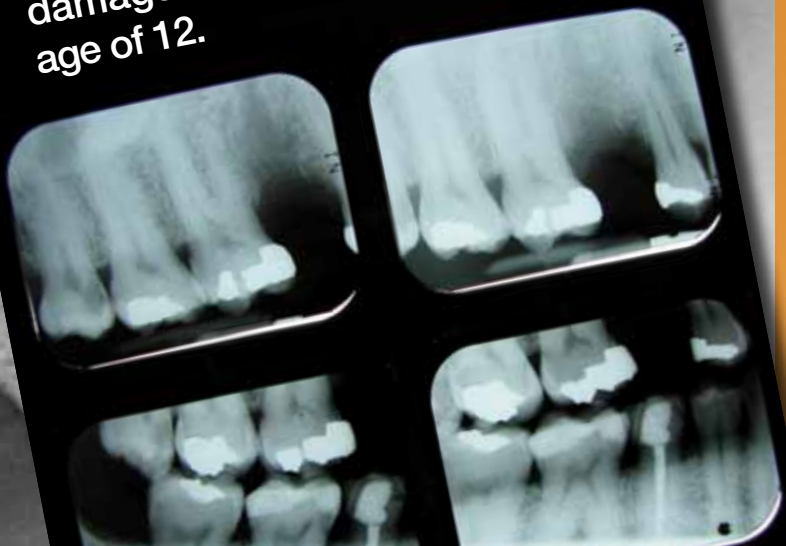
*This information will help guide you in making healthy choices when it comes to your oral health.*

### Key References

- Benelam, B. and Wyness, L. (2010). *Hydration and health: A review. Nutrition Bulletin*, 35, 3-25.
- Canadian Dental Association. (2005). Retrieved on May 17, 2011 from [http://www.cda-adc.ca/en/oral\\_health/index.asp](http://www.cda-adc.ca/en/oral_health/index.asp).
- Health Canada. (2010). *Report on the findings of the oral health component of the Canadian Health Measures Survey 2007-2009*. Retrieved on May 17, 2011 from <http://www.apha.org/NR/rdonlyres/23B5656E-E96F-4E17-B1EE-184303949ACC/0/CanadaOralHealth20079FullReport.pdf>.
- Ontario Dental Association. (2008). *Tooth decay in Ontario's children: an ounce of prevention - a pound of cure*. Retrieved on May 17 from <http://www.youroralhealth.ca>.



Almost 60% of Canadian children have a cavity or damaged tooth before the age of 12.



# 2011 Upcoming Events

I N W I N D S O R - E S S E X



## Parks Day

*July 16*

Come celebrate Parks Canada's 100th birthday at Fort Malden with activities that the whole family can enjoy.

Cost : Free

10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Fort Malden National Historic Site of Canada

100 Laird Avenue, Amherstburg

519-736-5415

caron.soulliere@pc.gc.ca

www.amherstburg.ca

## 6th Annual Running from Cancer

*July 24*

Fun family run raising funds for the Windsor & Essex County Cancer Centre Foundation and the Windsor Regional Hospital Foundation; Oncology Program.

Late Registration 5:30 to 7:45 a.m., Pre-race Instructions

6:45 and 7:45 a.m., Half Marathon 7 a.m., 5K and 10K

8 a.m., Disney Dash and 1K 9 a.m., Awards 9:30 a.m.

Cost: Registration fees vary per race

Tecumseh Arena

12021 McNorton, Tecumseh

www.runningfromcancer.com

## Blueberry Social & Lost Arts Festival

*August 6 and 7*

Celebrate the blueberry season with crafts, blueberry pie, ice cream sundaes, live music, and pick your own berries.

Also, see demonstrations of 19th century craft making including blacksmithing, wood carving, basket weaving, and much more.

Cost: Call for fee information

Sat. 12 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Sun. 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

John R. Park Homestead Conservation Area

915 County Road 50 E., Kingsville

519-738-2029

7 admin@erca.org

www.erca.org

## 3rd Annual Classic Car Show

*August 27*

Come to Jellystone Park to see some classic cars and raise money for the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Southwestern Ontario.

Register your car 10 a.m.

Viewing: 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Cost: Call for fee information

Jellystone Park

4610 Essex County Road 18, Amherstburg

519-736-3201

www.amherstburg.ca

## Windsor International Air Show 2011

*September 10 and 11*

Display of aerial pilot prowess with aerobatic displays. See military aircraft old and new close-up. Visit with veterans. Activities include helicopter and airplane rides, food and concessions, and a 3D flying museum with vintage aircraft.

9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Windsor International Airport

3200 County Road 42, Windsor

519-682-9797

www.winairshow.com

info@winairshow.com

## Ruthven Apple Festival

*September 24 and 25*

Fun for the entire family – food, crafts, musical entertainment, a host of midway rides and games for children, over 100 crafts and food vendors, the popular Farmers' Market, a car show, and the Apple Festival Parade. All proceeds to benefit Community Living Essex County.

Sat. 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Sun. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Colasanti's Tropical Gardens

1550 Road 3 E., Ruthven

519-776-6483

tonydesantis@communitylivingessex.org

www.communitylivingessex.org

## Make it Work

*October 5*

A conference on mental health and the workplace. Lunch provided. Speaker: Rona Maynard, author and former editor of Chatelaine Magazine

Workshops start at 8 a.m.

Caesars Windsor

377 Riverside Drive E., Windsor

519-255-7440

## Life After 50 Event

October 21 and 22

Come enjoy the 2nd annual Baby Boomer's and Seniors lifestyle event, featuring the Healthy Mind Expo, Autumn Auto Show & Shine, and much more!

Cost: Free (donations to Alzheimer's Society will be accepted at the door)

Fri. 12 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Sat. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

WFCU Centre

8787 McHugh Street Windsor

519-566-1536

lynne@orcaoccasions.com

www.lifeafter50event.com

## A Positive Space is a Healthy Place

October 28

Creating inclusive environments for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

Cost: \$60

Workshop runs from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

R.S.V.P. by October 7

Windsor Pride Community Centre

422 Pelissier Street

Windsor, Ontario

519-973-4656

neil@windsorpride.com

## Windsor-Essex County Health Unit

### Intake Nurse

The Intake Nurse provides information and telephone counselling on a wide variety of topics. Hours of operation are from Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. 519-258-2146 ext. 1350

### Off to a Great Start Program

Many researchers have found birth to age six as the most important time for development compared to any other time. It sets the stage for a child's success in school and into adulthood. For help along the way, the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit is now offering the Off to a Great Start Program. Check out our new website, [www.offtoagreatstart.org](http://www.offtoagreatstart.org) for current information, activities, and resources for the early years.

### Breastfeeding Support

If you're breastfeeding your baby and have questions, call the Intake Nurse at 519-258-2146 ext. 1350. If further help is needed, you can make an appointment to visit a Public Health Nurse at a breastfeeding clinic.

## Reading, Rhythm & Movement: Alternatives to TV (Preventing Obesity in Preschoolers)

A resource kit, *Reading, Rhythm & Movement:*

*Alternatives to TV (Preventing Obesity in Preschoolers)*

is available for loan at your local library or Ontario Early Years Centre. This kit includes a music CD and children's books that encourage movement, booklets on feeding infants and preschoolers, an activity planner, and a booklet on physical activities for children.

## Starting Early: Keeping Your Preschooler at a Healthy Weight

This new booklet offers easy, helpful advice on active living and healthy eating for your one to five year old child. Call the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit at 519-258-2146 ext. 1340 or 1-800-265-5822 ext. 1340 to have the booklet mailed to your home.

## Have Fun and Play Safe at the Playground

Playgrounds are a great place for children to be active, make friends, and develop skills. Playgrounds can also be a place where children get hurt. Supervision is the key to preventing injuries at the playground for preschool and school age children. For tips on how to have fun and play safe at the playground go to [www.wechealthunit.org/playground-safety](http://www.wechealthunit.org/playground-safety)

## CINOT Program

The Children in Need of Treatment (CINOT) program provides urgent dental care for children 17 years and under who don't have dental coverage.

## Healthy Smiles

Healthy Smiles Ontario is a new, no-cost dental program for children 17 and under who don't have access to dental coverage and who meet the program's eligibility requirements. Eligible children will receive preventive and early dental treatment services at no cost.

For more information on dental services call 519-258-2146 ext. 1103 or go to [www.wechealthunit.org/dental-health](http://www.wechealthunit.org/dental-health)

## Windsor-Essex County Health Unit Classes

There are many classes held in the city and county. Call the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit at 519-258-2146 ext. 1340 or 1-800-265-5822 ext. 1340 for location, time, and registration. The Windsor-Essex County Health Unit website, [www.wechealthunit.org](http://www.wechealthunit.org) has our current schedule of classes.

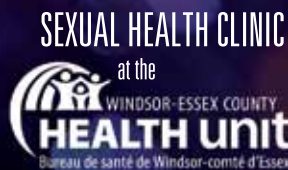
# NO symptoms required!

NO ITCHING  
NO DISCHARGE  
NO BURNING

**You can have a STI and NOT know it.**

Get tested. Free, confidential testing for sexually transmitted infections. Call the Sexual Health Clinic for an appointment.

**519-258-2146 ext. 1200**



## Does your workplace offer a comprehensive workplace wellness program?

If so, your workplace may qualify for the *Working Toward Wellness (WTW)* Healthy Workplace Award.

The WTW Healthy Workplace Awards honour local workplaces that provide a comprehensive workplace wellness program. Award recipients must demonstrate a strong commitment to improved health by promoting and supporting a comprehensive approach for employees, retirees, and their families.

Award Winners will be presented with their WTW Healthy Workplace Award at the 10th annual WTW Healthy Workplace Awards Presentation on October 19, 2011, during Canada's Healthy Workplace Month.

For more information, please call the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit at 519-258-2146 ext. 3100.



# Fluoride & Dental Health

## The Facts



Fluoride is an important nutrient for your dental health. Fluoride strengthens tooth enamel and protects teeth from the acids which cause tooth decay. It is estimated that combined, water fluoridation and fluoride from fluoridated toothpaste and mouth rinse reduce the prevalence of cavities by about 40%. Fluoridated water is a source of cavity prevention for entire communities; however, more than half of all Canadians (54.9%) do not have access to a fluoridated drinking water supply (Health Canada, 2010). This is because it is up to each municipal government to make the decision whether to add fluoride to the community water supply or not.

### The Fluoride Debate

In many cities, the decision to fluoridate drinking water is a hot topic. Those opposed are worried about the potential effects of over-fluoridation, particularly as it relates to dental fluorosis, a condition which appears as staining and/or pitting of the teeth. However, in a recent Canadian Health Measures Study less than 0.5% of all Canadian children ranging from 6 to 12 years were found to have moderate to severe fluorosis which could result in adverse dental effects.

Based on available data Health Canada has set Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality for

Fluoride at a Maximum Acceptable Concentration level of 1.5mg/L. Canada's Chief Dental Officer has set a level of 0.7 mg/L to be ideal for communities who choose to fluoridate, as this amount is optimal for dental health.

### How Much Fluoride Do You Need?

The Dietary Reference Intakes (DRIs) for fluoride are stated as the Adequate Intake (AI) and Tolerable Upper Intake Level (UL). The age-specific AI is the average daily intake that individuals should try to consume. The UL is the maximum daily intake that can be consumed without possible negative side effects.

Age	AI (mg/day) <sup>1</sup>	UL (mg/day) <sup>2</sup>	Age	AI (mg/day) <sup>1</sup>	UL (mg/day) <sup>2</sup>
0 to 6 mo	0.01	0.07	9 to 13 yrs	2	10
7 to 12 mo	0.5	0.9	14 to 18 yrs	3	10
1 to 3 yrs	0.7	1.3	Females 19 yrs & older	3	10
4 to 8 yrs	1	2.2	Males 19 yrs & older	4	10

### The Bottom Line

Health Canada (2008) recommends the following tips to minimize fluoride over exposure in small children:

- Never give fluoridated mouthwash/mouth rinses to children under six years of age, as they may swallow it.
- Talk to your dentist before using fluoridated mouthwash.
- Fluoride supplements (drops or tablets) are not recommended.
- Make sure that your children use no more than a pea-sized amount of toothpaste on their toothbrush. Be sure to teach them not to swallow toothpaste.
- Children under six years of age should be supervised while brushing.
- Children under the age of three should have their teeth brushed by an adult without using any toothpaste.



#### Key References

Health Canada. (2010). *Guidelines for Canadian Drinking Water Quality: Guideline Technical Document - Fluoride*. Ottawa, ON: Water, Air and Climate Change Bureau Healthy Environments and Consumer Safety Branch.

Health Canada, (2008), *Joint Government of Canada Response to Environmental Petition No. 221*. Retrieved June 27, 2011 from <http://www.fptdwc.ca/assets/PDF/0804-JointGovernmentofCanadaresponse.pdf>



“An Urgent  
Green-Light  
Initiative  
for Community  
Health”

Share your  
Wellness  
Story @

www.goforhealth.ca

## Websites:

Canadian Academy of Periodontology  
<http://www.cap-acp.ca/>

Canadian Association of Orthodontists  
<http://cao-aco.org/>

Canadian Dental Association  
[http://www.cda-adc.ca/en/oral\\_health/index.asp](http://www.cda-adc.ca/en/oral_health/index.asp)

Canadian Dental Hygienists Association  
[http://www.cdha.ca/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Oral\\_Care\\_Centre](http://www.cdha.ca/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Oral_Care_Centre)

<http://www.cdha.ca/> (click on oral care centre)

Federal, Provincial and Territorial  
Dental Working Group  
<http://www.fptdwg.ca/English/e-access.html>

Health Canada  
<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/life-vie/dent-eng.php>

KidsHealth  
<http://kidshealth.org/kid/>

Smile City  
<http://www.smilecity.ca/>

## Interested in Bringing Wellness to Your Workplace?

Do you have suggestions for future topics?  
Submit your ideas to the Workplace Team.

The *Working Toward Wellness* Program offers consultation & support to help workplaces start & maintain a wellness program that works.  
**CALL US TODAY!**

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Phone: 519-258-2146 ext. 3100  
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