

health | ssues

... in the workplace



The 2nd Annual Healthy Workplace Week Conference October 23, 2002 is fast approaching - See insert with this issue for more information!

THIS NEWSLETTER IS PART OF THE LIVE BETTER. LIVE LONGER. WORKPLACE HEALTH PROMOTION PROGRAM

Still the same reliable information with an updated look!

WHAT ARE YOUR STRESSORS?

Stress is a difficult emotion to pinpoint; everyone perceives it differently, experiences it differently and copes with it differently. It is a state of tension that's created in response to the demands and pressures from work, family and other external sources. It also results from sources that are internally created from self imposed demands, obligations and self-criticism. Stress can be triggered by many different things: happy events (a promotion, beginning a new job or buying a new home); sad events (a death in the family, insecurity about your job or losing your job); and physiological occurrences (changes in your health or working more than your regular scheduled hours).

One thing is for sure, many people feel stressed often. According to the 2001 Canadian Mental Health Survey, three quarters (76%) of Canadians feel really stressed at least once per month and about half (51%) state that work is a contributor to serious stress. But stress in the workplace may not always be a bad thing all the time. Forty one percent (41%) thought that the amount of stress they face has a large or somewhat positive impact on how they perform their jobs. On the other hand, 34% believe that it has a large or somewhat negative impact.

For workplaces, the cost of negative stress can be astronomical. Employee stress can result in burnout, absenteeism, reduced productivity, costly mistakes, poor morale, high employee turnover, increased health insurance costs and family, alcohol, gambling and drug related problems.

If your workplace has a keen interest in helping your employees reduce their amount of stress, contact us to access the variety of resources and promotions that we have developed on this important topic.

For more information contact *Thelma Maxwell, Public Health Nurse, Windsor-Essex County Health Unit, 258-2146 Ext. 3110.*



fall 2002

ACTIVITY FOR MENTAL WELL BEING

Engaging in physical activity or exercise not only benefits our physical health, it benefits our mental health as well! The Canadian Mental Health Association includes physical activity on its list of 18 tips for dealing with stress and tension. In a British review of medical studies on this subject, exercise was found to reduce anxiety and an individual's reaction to stress as well as enhance recovery from stressful situations.

Increased levels of stress often cause sleeping problems. Physical activity has

been found to have a positive effect on sleep - active individuals sleep better and wake feeling more rested.

However, it is important not to let exercise itself become a stressor! Employees should be encouraged to find ways to "fit" physical activity into their day without the stress of having to find time to "go to the gym." For example, employees can use their breaks to stretch at their desk or go for a walk during their lunch hour.

Research shows that mental health benefits can be realized from both single and

multiple exercise sessions. As a result, employees can be counseled to consider adding physical activity to their personal list of stress management techniques. A short bout of physical activity, such as a walk around the block, is a much healthier alternative to common stress management techniques such as an extra cigarette, a high fat snack or a cup of coffee.

For more information contact *Robin Cooper, Health Promotion Specialist, Windsor-Essex County Health Unit, 258-2146 Ext. 3109.*

what's inside Back to School Blues • "Butt" Out Your Stressors • Information For New Mothers • Up Coming Community Events • And More!

inside



ROAD RAGE

Aggressive driving increases a motorist's risk of a collision, injury and even death. It also can result in emotional and financial costs associated with injury and lost time at work.

We often point out "bad" driving behaviours of other drivers, but how do others view us? By answering the following questions, individuals can find out if they are an "aggressive driver" or a "smooth operator." Answer **Yes or No** to the following questions:

- I avoid weaving in and out of traffic if I'm late for work or an appointment.
- I yield to faster traffic by moving to the right.
- I yield to pedestrians.
- I follow right-of-way rules at four-way stops.
- I drive at slower speeds in construction zones.
- I avoid returning inappropriate gestures.
- I avoid challenging other drivers.
- I avoid distractions such as cell phones, reading, shaving or smoking a cigarette while driving.
- I maintain the appropriate speed limit.
- I avoid tailgating.
- I come to a complete stop at stop signs or red lights.
- I use my horn sparingly.

If the answer to any of the above questions was "no" is an indication that driving habits need to be reviewed. Remember...the term "**accident**" can be misleading as most motor vehicle crashes are preventable!

For more information contact Thelma Maxwell, Public Health Nurse, Windsor-Essex County Health Unit, 258-2146 Ext. 3110.

GOT THE "BACK-TO-SCHOOL BLUES"?

Making the transition to school easier for parents and kids! Transitions from one environment to another provide opportunities for children to learn and grow. However, the anticipation and excitement of returning to school may combine with anxiety to create an emotionally charged home environment. Parents can reduce the stress and make the transition to school easier by following these simple steps.

Be Enthusiastic

If you are excited and confident about the new school year, your child will be too.

Read, Read, Read

Set aside at least 20 minutes every day to read with or to your child. Making reading a routine will "sharpen" reading skills. Choose reading materials that interest your child and find ways to make reading fun (e.g. reading outside in a tent with a flashlight).

It's Just Routine

Children find comfort in daily routines. By establishing rituals and routines, parents can help children feel more secure, less distracted and ready to learn. For younger children, developing a "getting ready" routine and sticking with it is the key to happy mornings. A quiet bedtime routine that allows, "together-time" for parents and children will reduce stress and result in a well-rested child.

Be Prepared

Before bed, prepare for the next day by packing lunches and backpacks, picking out clothing and putting everything in a standard location, to help reduce morning stress.

Remember, communication is key to building strong family relations and well-adjusted healthy, children. Talk often with your children and keep the lines of communication open with the teacher and the school. Have a great year!

For more information contact Beth Dulmage, Manager Comprehensive School Health, Windsor-Essex County Health Unit, 258-2146 Ext. 1261.



" B U T T " O U T Y O U R S T R E S S O R S

For some, smoking provides feelings of calmness, however a smokers internal stress level is actually increased. The nicotine in tobacco causes a smoker's heart rate and blood pressure to increase. Research shows that if smokers are already in a bad mood, it will worsen between cigarettes. This is because tension and irritability build up during nicotine depletion.

Family problems, financial troubles, selling or buying a house and conflicts with your boss are examples of common stressors. While you may feel overwhelmed in such situations, you can control your response to them. Previously you may have responded by lighting up. But if you want to quit or are in the

process of quitting, you can replace this response with healthier options. For example, try exercising, keeping a journal, talking, taking personal time, praying, laughing, singing, dancing and meditating.

If you are thinking about quitting smoking, you may be interested in ordering a free 33-page guide, "Smoking Cessation Options For Windsor-Essex County Residents." The options include such things as laser therapy, acupuncture, drug & nicotine replacement therapies and hypnosis. Quitting smoking may actually help you to reduce the stress in your life.

For more information contact Richard Kokovai, Tobacco Prevention Specialist, Windsor-Essex County Health Unit, 258-2146 Ext. 3111.

Stress Management Conference

Managing stress. If you'd like practical tips that you can easily take back and use in your workplace, then plan to attend the October 23 "Stress Management in the Workplace" workshop. See the enclosed brochure for more details or call 258-2146 Ext. 3100.

Healthy Workplace Week Events - October 21 - 27, 2002

A series of events planned for the week including presentations on stress management, caring for older adults, stress management for parents of toddlers and preschoolers and gambling as a stressor. For more details check out the insert with this newsletter or call the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit 258-2146 Ext. 3100.

Breastfeeding Drop-In Clinics

"Breastfeeding your baby? Do you have questions?" Drop-in clinics provided by Windsor-Essex County Health Unit Public Health Nurses. Tuesdays: 1:30-3:30 p.m.

Windsor-Essex County Health Unit, 215 Talbot St E, Leamington

Fridays: 9:30-11:30 a.m.

Sandwich Community Health Centre, 749 Felix Avenue, Windsor

Just for Moms and Babies

A group providing health information and support for new moms. This is a six-week series being held at various locations. Call the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit for a time and location convenient for you, 258-2146 Ext. 1350.

Working to Decrease Influenza in Ontario

The government of Ontario is preparing to offer the universal influenza immunization program in the fall. According to the Canadian Coalition for Influenza Immunization, the flu virus may affect one in four Canadians and costs to the Canadian economy is approximately one half billion dollars annually. Providing a free vaccine to residents of Ontario has decreased the number of reported cases from 2,899 in 1999-2000 to 854 cases in 2000-2001. Prior to the program, 41% of reported Canadian cases were in Ontario. After providing the vaccine in the 2000-2001 flu season, only 20.5% of the reported cases were in Ontario. The decrease in the number of cases can also have a positive impact in the workplace. A study published in the New England Journal of Medicine identified that holding workplace flu clinics equates to a cost savings for employers of \$46.85us per employee vaccinated. The Windsor-Essex County Health Unit will be providing community clinics, for more information on the times and locations of the clinics contact the Influenza Information Line, 258-2146 Ext. 1433.



REDUCING STRESS WITH MASSAGE

What do irritability, anxiety, fatigue, inability to concentrate, nervousness and insomnia all have in common? They are all reactions to stress. Stress is our response to certain demands on the body or mind. It is our reaction to stress that may be the difference between positive action and a destructive breakdown.

In cases of long term stress, health problems such as hypertension, a peptic ulcer or even heart disease may result. Stress can also suppress the immune system resulting in an increased susceptibility to infection. Muscle tension can remain as a prolonged manifestation of stress and can cause stiffness of the neck, migraine/tension headaches and back pain. Massage therapy is a relaxing method to help reduce or eliminate the symptoms of stress and to alleviate overall tension in the body. Massage has been shown to increase serotonin, a hormone released in the body. Increased levels of serotonin have been linked to feelings of increased relaxation and improved sleep.

Take the initiative and manage stress, whether it is through a massage or another method. It could mean reducing the chance of stress related health problems from surfacing.

For more information contact Maria Kuharic, Registered Massage Therapist, 561-9434.

INFORMATION FOR NEW MOTHERS

For many women, life with a newborn can seem like an emotional roller coaster. Anywhere between 50-80% of new mothers experience the "Postpartum Blues," during the third to the tenth day after birth. During this period, new mothers may have feelings of irritability and anxiety, periods of crying as well as feeling overwhelmed.

For some women, these feelings become more intense and lead to a "Postpartum Mood Disorder or Depression". This disorder may start suddenly or it may start slowly and can occur anywhere from 3 weeks to 1 year after delivery. Depressed mothers may experience difficulty attending to the emotional and physical needs of their children. Professional support can help families deal with this difficult time.

The least common form of a postpartum mood disorder is a postpartum psychosis which affects 1-2 women per 1000 births. This condition poses the most immediate threat to the safety of the mother and the child. The mother may have hallucinations, delusions, confusion or paranoia. This requires immediate medical intervention and hospitalization.

Learning more about postpartum depression can help. It is important for mothers to ask for help and to keep asking until they receive it.

For more information or help call: The 24 hours Crisis Line at 973-4435, The Community Crisis Centre of Windsor-Essex County at 973-4411 Ext. 3003 or The Windsor-Essex County Health Unit at 258-2146 Ext. 1350.



WEBSITE SUPPORT

Stress Management

Check out this site for ideas on work-life balance.
<http://labour-travail.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/worklife/welcome-en.cfm>

Find out more about the causes and effects of stress by logging onto the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety (see Psychological Issues) www.ccohs.ca

Parenting

Check out this site for more information about parenting classes
www.wehealthunit.org

For more ideas on parenting call Pass-Can Postpartum Adjustment Support Services Canada (905) 844-9009 or log onto www.passcan.ca

Aggressive Driving

Find out more on road safety, log onto www.mto.gov.on.ca

Aggressive driving, another form of Russian Roulette www.safety-council.org

Healthy Eating

Log on to this site for Canada's Food Guide
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hppb/nutrition/pube/foodguid/index.html

Retirement

Ontario Seniors' Secretariat
www.gov.on.ca/mczcr/seniors/

Seniors Canada Online
www.seniors.gc.ca

Links to many senior websites that may assist with the retirement process.
www.gov.on.ca/citizenship/seniors/english/links.htm

www.retiredpersonsplus.com
Association for Retired Persons



Interested in bringing wellness to your workplace? The Live Better. Live Longer. Workplace Health Promotion Program offers an award program. For more information call 258-2146 x 3102.

DIET AND STRESS CONNECTION

A healthy diet won't prevent stress but it will help you react well when a stressful situation arises. A healthy diet helps the body fight infections and illnesses that can occur during prolonged stress.

To help handle stress employees should be encouraged to:

- Eat a well balanced diet by following Canada's Food Guide to Healthy Eating
- Eat at least three meals a day
- Make mealtimes a chance to slow down and relax
- Enjoy meals with your family and friends
- Choose healthy snacks such as popcorn, pretzels or low-fat crackers, low-fat yogurt or fresh fruit when they feel the urge to eat to deal with stress
- Have small frequent meals to help overcome the urge to overeat
- Cut down on caffeine such as coffee, tea and soft drinks

It should be noted that although there are many supplements marketed claiming to help relieve stress, all claims are not supported by research. There is no substitute for a healthy, balanced diet.

For more information contact Heather Langille, Nutritionist, Windsor-Essex County Health Unit, 258-2146 Ext. 3104.

REDUCING STRESS IN RETIREMENT

When planned, retirement can be an exciting, freeing time. Many resources devoted to retirement planning tend to focus on its financial aspects. While important, financial planning is just one of many issues to consider when preparing for this new stage of life.

Prior to making the decision to retire individuals should, create a "Do-It-Yourself" retirement package by considering these questions: What is motivating me to retire? Are there others who will be affected by my decision (i.e. a spouse, aging parents, children still living at home)? How well do I know myself? What are my passions and my interests? How do I envision "retired life" and is my vision realistic? Will I continue to work part-time, return to school, learn a new hobby, explore a different career or volunteer for a cause that interests me? How will my plan change 5, 10 or 15 years from now?

A retired individual once noted she had read non-stop during her working life. Reading allowed her to escape the stress of work. After 1 year of retirement, she now reports that, to her surprise, she reads very little. "There's no point in escaping to paradise," she explains, "I already live there!"

For more information and resources to help you plan or deal with retirement, contact Jill Cadarette, B.A., B.S.W., R.S.W. at Centres For Seniors Windsor, 254-1108.

Do you have suggestions for future topics?

Please submit your ideas to Jennifer Mariuz

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