

HEALTH ISSUES

IN THE WORKPLACE

{Fall 2016}



Ease your Mind

CHOOSE WATER!

WATER DOES WONDERS



HEALTHY KIDS
COMMUNITY CHALLENGE
WINDSOR-ESSEX

ENFANTS EN SANTÉ
ACTION COMMUNAUTAIRE
WINDSOR-ESSEX

Take
charge
WINDSOR-ESSEX

WEhealthykids.ca

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MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH: IT'S OKAY TO ASK FOR HELP

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ONE IN FIVE CANADIANS WILL EXPERIENCE A MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM IN THEIR LIFETIME. IT IS IMPORTANT TO CARE FOR YOURSELF IN ORDER TO EASE YOUR MIND.

Welcome to *Ease Your Mind*. This issue of our newsletter series focuses on mental health & suicide prevention in order to provide you with information, resource links, and practical tips on how to support your health, and the health of those you care about.

Articles in this *Health Issues Newsletter* address mental health awareness, work-life balance, caregiver support, and men's mental health. In addition, this issue discusses how to create and promote safe environments within the workplace for employees, many of which are acting as caregivers to loved ones in addition to their regular job.

One in five Canadians will experience a mental health problem in their lifetime. It is important to care for yourself; to take time to enjoy activities with loved ones, ask for help when needed, make an effort to stay physically active, and make a point to relax and unwind daily.

Given that a working person will spend most of their waking hours (60%) at work than anywhere else in their day, and the working age population (16-64) represents one of the highest risk groups for suicide, employers should

promote a supportive environment. In addition, it is important that management and staff are provided training on how to recognize the warning signs of suicide and how to support those who are struggling with mental health.

Coming soon! Watch for the upcoming initiative to learn about injury prevention and how to reduce your risk of injury in everyday living.



COMING SOON! Watch for the upcoming initiative to reduce your risk of injury during everyday living.

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FREE DENTAL SCREENING FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS

Children should have their first dental screening by their first birthday. Screenings by a public health dental hygienist include checking for cavities, checking for healthy tooth development, and a fluoride treatment at no cost.

HEALTHY SMILES

Healthy Smiles Ontario is a no cost dental program for children 17 and under who meet the program's eligibility requirements. For more information on dental services call **519-258-2146 ext. 1199** or go to www.wechu.org/dental-health

HEALTHY FAMILIES HOTLINE

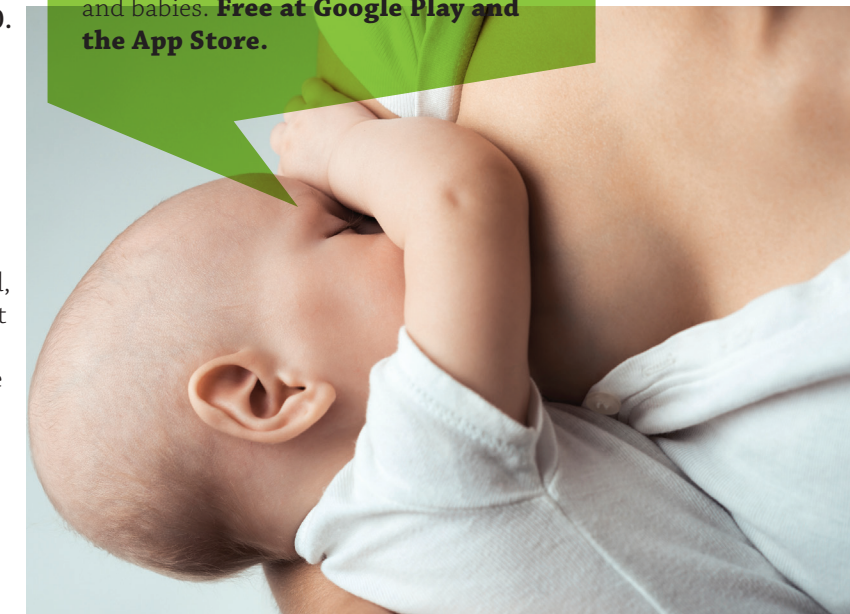
A public health nurse is available to provide information and telephone counselling on a wide variety of topics (e.g., parenting, infant care, pregnancy, community resources). Hours of operation are from **Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.** Call **519-258-2146 ext. 1350**.

BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT

If you're breastfeeding your baby and have questions, call the Healthy Families Hotline at **519-258-2146 ext. 1350**. If further assistance is needed, you can make an appointment to visit a public health nurse at a breastfeeding clinic in the city or county.

BREASTFEEDING APP WYNI

When You Need It: Breastfeeding Information. A new breastfeeding app is available for Android and iPhone phones in both English and French. Get answers to breastfeeding questions, track feedings, wet and dirty diapers, and baby's height and weight. **WYNI** is filled with colourful pictures, helpful diagrams, and videos that provide support for breastfeeding moms and babies. **Free at Google Play and the App Store.**



MEET SMART
certified

Does your workplace plan meetings, host events, or workshops where healthier food choices are few and far between?

The *Meet Smart* program can help you lead healthier meetings and events, even on a tight budget.

Contact a Registered Dietitian at 519-258-2146 ext. 3100 to find out how your workplace can become *Meet Smart* certified.

KNOW YOUR LEVEL

November is Radon Action Month in Canada.

Radon

Did you know? Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in Canada.

Radon is a colourless, odourless, tasteless gas that is in almost every home. The only way to know the level of radon in your home is to test for it. Test your home for radon this winter, and take the first step in keeping you and your family safe.



Find out more about radon on our website at www.wechu.org or by calling 519-258-2146 ext. 1454.

WHO'S CARING FOR THE CAREGIVERS?

35%

Thirty-five percent of working Canadians also provide some form of care to a family member or friend.

\$1.3 billion dollars

The time dedicated to this leads to an estimated \$1.3 billion lost in workforce productivity due to caregiver commitments.

WEBSITES + RESOURCES

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON MENTAL HEALTH VISIT:

Canadian Mental Health Association:
www.cmha.ca/mental-health/

Mental Health Commission of Canada:
www.mentalhealthfirstaid.ca/EN/Pages/default.aspx

Ontario Mental Health Helpline:
www.mentalhealthhelpline.ca/

The Ontario Mental Health Foundation:
www.omhf.on.ca/home/

Workplace Strategies for Mental Health
www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com



Family caregivers play an important role in providing support for their loved ones. They are often the first to deal with crises and assist their loved ones in navigating a sometimes complicated healthcare system. Family caregiving reduces the burden on professional costs of health services and allows the care receiver the opportunity to stay at home, and maintain a higher quality of life. There can be negative consequences on caregivers however, as the stress may lead caregivers to experience physical and mental health issues, as well as a strain on their finances as a result of caring for their loved ones.

A 2013 Statistics Canada report indicates that caregivers who provided two or more hours of care per week tended to experience worry or distress as a result of these responsibilities. Given that on average, those caring for a spouse, parent, or child spend upwards of four hours per day providing care, it is not surprising that caregivers often report feelings of sadness, anger and report symptoms of depression, as well as a decline in their overall physical health. These effects can also extend into the workplace. Employees who are caregivers tend to experience more interruptions at work, may have lower productivity, and/or have higher rates of lateness and absenteeism. Additionally, they may be less able to work overtime or take advantage of career advancing opportunities.



IF YOU ARE A CAREGIVER:

Look for ways to reduce life stressors that are within your control. Remember to take time for yourself but stay connected to others.

IF YOU ARE AN EMPLOYER:

Consider what it would take to create a caregiver-friendly workplace and take steps toward this. Facilitate open lines of communication with employees to ensure those who may have caregiving duties feel supported at work. It is important to start the discussion with employees who are caregivers and support them so that they can fulfill their personal responsibilities of caregiving, while also being successful in their career. When a caregiver is well supported, they are able to better care for their loved ones and be healthier and more productive members of the workforce.



ACTIVE BODY, HEALTHY MIND

Mental health issues and illnesses affect people of all ages, ethnicities, and socioeconomic backgrounds. In fact, one in five Canadians will experience a mental health disorder in their lifetime. In addition to medication, supplements, and therapy, which are often used to help treat mental health issues, physical activity can also help with one's mental state. Being active on a regular basis not only helps with physical conditions, such as cardiovascular disease and obesity, but can help to decrease symptoms of mental illnesses as well.

Mental illness impacts the lives of all Canadians in some capacity. The benefits of physical activity in the prevention and treatment of mental illness cannot be overlooked. If you, or someone you love is struggling with a mental health disorder, talk to your healthcare provider about treatment options, and try to include physical activity as part of your daily routine.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AS PREVENTION

While genetics, brain chemistry, psychological trauma, substance misuse and work stress can all contribute to mental health issues, physical activity has been shown to positively impact mental health. When we exercise, endorphins, serotonin and dopamine are released in the brain, which serve to elevate mood and alleviate stress. Physically active people have a reduced tendency to develop major depression, panic disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), and phobias. Research has also indicated that regular workouts (i.e., 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity activity each week) help people who are prone to anxiety, as exercise deepens breathing and helps to relieve muscle tension.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AS TREATMENT

Treatment for mental illnesses can take many forms. Physical activity as a treatment not only benefits physical health, but mental health as well. Studies show that aerobic exercise is more effective than occupational therapy for depressed patients and is associated with an anti-depressant effect. The long term effects of physical activity are also promising. Research reveals that patients engaging in regular physical activity are more likely to recover from their mental health disorder at a three-year follow-up than those who were not active. Incorporating physical activity into a treatment plan will help to decrease the effects of a variety of mental health disorders.




EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Major disasters are often unpredictable. Are you and your family prepared?

During an emergency you may need to survive without important services like power or tap water. In order to cope, it is important for all households to have an emergency kit of basic supplies (enough to last at least three days).

**Know the Risks
Make a Plan
Prepare a 72hr Kit**

WECHU For more information on emergency preparedness and items to consider for a kit visit www.wechu.org



Basic items for a 72hr Kit

- Water (2 litres/person/day)
- Non-perishable food
- Manual can opener
- First aid kit
- Prescription drugs
- Personal hygiene items
- Cash
- Basic tools
- Radio (crank or battery)
- Extra keys to car and house
- Clothing and footwear
- Blankets or sleeping bags
- Candles, and lighter or matches
- Copies of important documents
- Flashlight (crank or battery)

ONTARIO'S IMPAIRED DRIVING RULES ARE CHANGING TO KEEP YOU SAFE

Here's what changed on October 2, 2016
ontario.ca/transportation



Caught driving while drug impaired? It will cost you.

Drivers impaired by drugs will face the same sanctions as drivers impaired by alcohol. This includes illegal drugs, and misuse of prescriptions or over-the-counter medications.

At roadside – Your driver's licence suspended from 3 to 30 days and a \$180 penalty.

After a drug expert's evaluation – Your driver's licence suspended for 90 days, your vehicle impounded for 7 days and a \$180 penalty.

Repeat occurrences will result in a mandatory education/treatment program and an ignition interlock condition for 6 months after licence reinstatement.

Criminal charges may also apply.

MEN'S MENTAL HEALTH:

It's Okay to Ask for Help



Each year, one in five Canadians will experience a mental health problem. This is of particular concern to men, as many males are not comfortable talking about their feelings, let alone symptoms of a mental health problem. What's more, even if they talk about it, men are less likely to seek out the help they need in a timely manner. This is a problem because when a mental health issue is left unresolved, it could lead to depression; up to and including thoughts or actions of self-harm. With this in mind, it is not surprising that three out of four deaths by suicide are men.

WHAT CAN MEN DO?

Men need to be proactive when it comes to their mental health. They need to be familiar with the risk factors and the signs and symptoms of a mental illness. If they feel they are experiencing a mental health problem, they need to share how they are feeling with a family member, friend, or a healthcare professional. They should also stay connected with family and friends so they have a strong social support network if things get difficult. The truth is, the "manly" thing to do is to take care of yourself. Talk about things before they get overwhelming, and protect your mental health so that you are able to be there for those that care about you.



WHY ARE MEN NOT ASKING FOR HELP?

In many cultures, men have been taught from a young age that part of being a man means being strong, self-reliant and not showing any emotions. This type of thinking and pressure can lead to poor mental health outcomes. Common reasons might be that:

- 1) Men are often reluctant to express or communicate their emotions and feelings to friends, co-workers, or family members. This can lead to isolation; potentially leading to worsening mental health issues.
- 2) Too many men believe they should be self-reliant and will usually not seek out help until late in the process of a mental health issue.

- 3) Most men spend large amounts of time in leisure activities (i.e., watching television, searching the internet, or playing video games) where they are alone and disconnected from friends, co-workers, and family for long periods of time. This can result in a reduced connection with important sources of support when dealing with a potential mental health problem.
- 4) Men who believe they just have to be tough will usually lack adequate coping strategies that are needed when dealing with any trauma, loss, or major stressors. Coping strategies that are used will usually involve unhealthy practices such as substance misuse (e.g., alcohol), which can lead to even more harm to both their physical and mental wellbeing

500,000
CANADIANS MISS WORK DUE TO MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES EACH WEEK.

Those that take time off work (i.e., leave of absence) due to a mental health issue may experience negative emotions, such as low self-esteem, feelings of being misunderstood, or fear of losing their job. No matter what the reason is for taking time off work, the workplace plays a pivotal role in an individual's journey towards recovery, as well as how soon and under which conditions they are able to return to work

SOMEONE RETURNING TO WORK AFTER A LEAVE OF ABSENCE DUE TO A MENTAL HEALTH ISSUE SHOULD:

1. **Work With Their Employer to Understand Their Rights.** Employers have a legal responsibility to create a mentally healthy work environment, avoid discrimination, and provide accommodations. Discuss with the employer about what strategies would be helpful in being successful at work (e.g., written instructions, quiet work space, having large tasks broken into smaller ones, working from home, or more frequent breaks).
2. **Slowly Integrate One's Self Back into Work.** Work with the employer to return to work at a pace that works for everyone. Discuss options such as a gradual return to work or a flexible work schedule.
3. **Communicate.** Specific workplace conditions, situations, or tasks may increase stress or anxiety. Let the employer know what these are, and how they can be managed in order to reduce the impact.

Planning for a Successful RETURN TO WORK

When a colleague returns to work, don't assume that you know the reason they were off. Instead, offer to help them ease back into the job.

1. **Ask How You Can Help.** Offer support when you can and respect your co-worker's wishes if they would like to be left alone.
2. **Provide Encouraging Words.** Positive conversations can help motivate someone who's just returning to work. Provide suggestions on how to reduce or manage work stress and acknowledge the value the employee brings to the team.
3. **Include Them in Usual Activities.** Continue to include your co-worker in workplace activities and events. Support them in easing back into a normal routine.

If you know someone that is returning back to your workplace, be mindful of what is said around this person and treat them respectfully. Encourage them to stay in contact with their healthcare provider through the re-integration process to help ensure success and prevent relapse.

SUICIDE PREVENTION AND THE WORKPLACE

The workplace environment contributes to a person's physical, psychological, and emotional well-being. Due to the amount of time spent in the workplace this makes it an important setting for mental health promotion and suicide prevention. What's more, the working-age population (16-64) represents one of the highest risk groups for suicide. Males are three to four times more likely to die by suicide than females, with the highest rates being middle-aged men (40-59).

PREVENTING SUICIDE

By creating a culture within the workplace that promotes and supports positive mental health, suicide prevention can be addressed on multiple fronts. This can be supported by awareness-raising campaigns, stress-management and resilience strategies, mental health and suicide prevention training and workshops. It's important to understand the factors that may increase the risk of suicide and to recognize the warning signs. There are often warning signs before a person gets to the point of seriously considering self-harm or suicide. Given the right education and tools, managers and staff are able to identify these warning signs and support employees at risk.

AN ACRONYM THAT CAN BE USED TO REMEMBER THE WARNING SIGNS OF SUICIDE – IS PATH WARM.

Ideation (suicidal thoughts), **S**ubstance abuse, **P**urposelessness, **A**nxiety, **T**rapped, **H**opelessness, **W**ithdrawal, **A**nger, **R**ecklessness, **M**ood changes.

The two most important things to do for someone who is thinking about suicide are:

1. Have a conversation

If you are concerned about a co-worker, approach them, listen carefully, and without judgement. It's important to ask them directly if they are thinking about suicide, and if they have a plan

There is no workplace that is immune to the impact and devastation of suicide. However, steps can be taken to prevent suicide in the workplace. For more information on the warning signs of suicide or how to help someone thinking about suicide, contact a local crisis or distress centre.

and a means to carry it out. If yes, do not leave them alone and get help right away from a local crisis number or 9-1-1. Talking about suicide with a vulnerable person will not give them the idea.

2. Mental health services and support

Help your co-worker to identify and contact appropriate support services. Check to see what your Employee and Family Assistance Programs or Employee Assistance Programs offer. Often they provide confidential assistance, referrals, and counselling. There are also many community mental health services and support, including specialized providers, and local crisis or distress centres.

Working Towards WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Canadians play many different roles in the lives of others; they are workers, spouses, parents, caregivers, and friends. If you are finding it challenging to balance your work and personal life, you are not alone. Fifty eight percent (58%) of Canadians report experiencing "overload" from the pressures associated with work, family, and friends. When you are always on the go, it can be challenging to balance the items on your to-do list with your personal well-being. Improving your work-life balance can help you to manage multiple responsibilities at work, home, and in your community, while reaching your personal goals and maintaining your quality of life. Here are some suggestions that you might find helpful in improving your work-life balance:

AT WORK

- **Schedule short breaks.** Take your scheduled breaks throughout the day to help you clear your mind, relax your body, and focus on your tasks.
- **Before you leave work, set realistic goals for the next day.** Setting goals will help you prioritize your tasks so you will feel ready to begin your work day.
- **Check your emails at scheduled times.** For example, check your email at the beginning of your shift, before lunch, and at the end of the day. This will help you address important messages in a timely fashion, as well as avoid distraction as messages come in.
- **Create a buffer between work and home.** Make a conscious effort to separate work and home by turning off work electronics (i.e., cell phones, laptops, and pagers) once you leave your workplace.

AT HOME

- **Spend time unwinding after work.** Go for a walk, do a crossword puzzle, run a relaxing bath, or listen to some music to recharge your batteries before starting tasks at home.
- **Schedule in fun time.** Make time for your favourite activities with your friends and family. This will give you something positive to look forward to.
- **Get moving.** Be active for at least 150 minutes a week to feel more energized and refreshed to tackle tomorrow.
- **Get support.** Talk to your loved ones about the stress you are facing at work.

KNOW YOUR OPTIONS. Flexible work hours, working from home, and job sharing are all examples of programs an employer may be able to offer. Employers who support work-life balance programs attract and retain quality employees who are engaged, motivated, and energized at work. This improves organizational profitability, productivity, and customer satisfaction. Work-life balance is a continuous process, but it can be possible by working with your family, friends, and employer to ensure you are aware of your options. If you are feeling like your work and personal life are out of balance, talk to a healthcare provider or your employee assistance program representative for help.