



# FITNESS WORKS

WINTER 2001

## *CCHALW wants to connect you... are you ready?*

In the last newsletter we reflected on the evolution of workplace physical activity over the past several decades. Now, with a new century ahead of us, let's turn toward the future and the exciting direction that our programs and businesses will take. All around us, more companies and organizations are investing in employee health – from mandatory health and safety committees to the broader perspective of employee wellness. Many factors have created the new environment but none are as pervasive and far reaching as technology.

Technology has become both a friend and enemy to those of us in the health and active living business. We cringe at the thought of all the hours being eaten up by Internet “play” yet we welcome the diverse quantities of new materials and information at hand to assist us with our planning. Our concern is the potential for decreasing time spent being physically active each day but we've begun to look at ways of counteracting the sedentary desk potato with cyber stretching and desktop yoga programs. We

are determined not to let a little technology get in the way of active living. Our challenge is to reach out to the unconverted and now we have a new method at our disposal!

As workplace health and active living professionals, we need and expect a timely flow of information pertaining to our industry. With this in mind, the *Canadian Council for Health and Active Living at Work* has been busy with several new projects. First, our partnership with Health Canada on the Business Case for Active Living at Work which is detailed further in this newsletter. Take the time to check out this exciting new tool that will keep you coming back. Secondly, the CCHALW has decided to create its own web-site to keep workplace active living professionals up to date on available resources. You will need to bookmark the site as a place to go to get your connections. As a volunteer organization, we do not have the capacity to create new products but we will partner with others to link you with useful materials, research and organizations.

Whether you are interested in contributing to the CCHALW web-site, have ideas for partnering possibilities or want to share your experiences, we want to hear from you. Please communicate with us by:

Phone: (613) 824-0865 or E-mail:  
bray.todesco@sympatico.ca

### **MEMBERS OF THE CANADIAN COUNCIL FOR HEALTH AND ACTIVE LIVING AT WORK**

#### **Suzanne Bray**

*Coordinator*

Tel: (613) 824-0865

Fax: (613) 739-1566

bray.todesco@sympatico.ca

#### **Tim Snow**

Tel: (506) 451-6681

Fax: (506) 452-0876

#### **Sandy Horne-Price**

Tel: (403) 337-2933

#### **Jack Smith**

Tel: (613) 739-1535 ext. 225

Fax: (613) 739-1566

#### **Marion Reeves**

*Chair Person*

Tel/Fax: (905) 727-5501



### **Canadian Council for Health and Active Living at Work**

The mission of the Canadian Council for Health and Active Living at Work (CCHALW) is to promote healthier workplaces by providing leadership and support to Active Living professionals and the Business Community.

#### **AREAS OF INTEREST**

- *Advocacy and Promotion*
- *Partnership and Networking*
- *Resources Development*
- *Management*

The following article is from the Canadian Medical Association Journal and will be useful to professionals in providing rationale for workplace programs for families.

## ARE WE BREEDING A CULTURE OF OBESITY?

**F**lopping on the couch with the remote in hand or remaining glued to the computer screen for hours on end are helping to create a society of obesity in Canada, as indicated in a series of articles and commentaries featured in the latest issue of the Canadian Medical Association Journal.

In their analysis of body mass index (BMI) data compiled in 3 national databases, Mark Tremblay and Douglas Williams found that the number of obese children in Canada has more than doubled since 1981. In 1981, 15% of children were overweight, while 5% were obese. In 1996, 28.8% of boys and 23.6% of girls were overweight, while 13.5% of boys and 11.8% of girls were obese.

In a related commentary, Ross Anderson discusses causes, including the sacrifice of physician-education programs due to budgetary restraint.

The poor dietary habits learned in childhood come home to roost later in life. Peter Katzmarzyk and colleagues report that about \$2.1 billion, or 2.5% of Canada's direct health care costs, were attributable to physical inactivity in 1999. To put this in context, the authors point out that cigarette smoking accounted for 3.8% of total health care costs in 1992.

The calculation is based on a summary of relative-risk estimates from coronary artery disease, stroke, colon cancer, breast cancer, type 2 diabetes mellitus and osteoporosis. The authors suggest that reducing the prevalence of inactivity by just 10% could reduce health care costs by \$150 million a year.

In a related editorial, Robert Karman suggests that while telling people about the economic savings for the health care system is not likely to motivate individual change, that is no reason to give up.

"Even if we can't precisely qualify the economic gains of increasing physical activity, we should continue to provide the best rationale and incentives to encourage participation in the best fitness programs we can," writes Karman.

Source: *Canadian Medical Association Journal*



### Tips for Active Living in the workplace

- Walk/jog/wheel or cycle during your lunch hour.
- Create a new morning routine. Start your day with 10 minutes of movement indoors or outdoors. Some stretching and a short walk first thing in the morning can be better than caffeine!
- If you must drive to work, park a reasonable distance from your work site so that a small walk is created.
- If you are able to move away from your work space during the day, plan *regular* intervals incorporating physical activity from stretching to a walk to the water fountain.
- If you must stay at your station, use breaks to give

your muscles some necessary stretching and relieve built-up tension.

- Participate in activities organized within the workplace setting or organize an active get-together for your co-workers to enjoy.
- Use a pedometer to mark a set distance around your workplace, either indoors or out and challenge your co-workers to completing a predetermined distance over several months.
- Get off the bus two stops early and walk home.

Source: *Ideas from workplace active living professionals and Health Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living.*

First came Canada's Physical Activity Guide,  
Next came Canada's Physical Activity Guide  
for Older Adults

**COMING  
SOON**

## **THE BUSINESS CASE FOR ACTIVE LIVING AT WORK**

***SNEAKERS ARE BEING LACED, BICYCLES ARE BEING TUNED....***

***THAT IS RIGHT! Coming soon the business community will be presented with an exciting new Online Workplace Active Living Resource which will revolutionize the way employers and employees view healthy active living and physical activity.***

1. Questions you have been asking; will be answered
2. Research you have been looking for; will be available
3. Statistics you have been needing; will be accessible
4. Case Studies you have been seeking; will be listed
5. Contacts you have been chasing; will be detailed
6. This and much, much more.

### **WHO IS THIS FOR?**

7. Leaders in business, industry
8. Labour
9. Government
10. Employees themselves

***So lace up your sneakers and  
plug in your computer***

***Visit  
[www.ActiveLivingAtWork.com](http://www.ActiveLivingAtWork.com)  
to register today!!!***



As people involved in workplace health and active living, we often must try to provide information that will address the lifestyle choices being made by employees. The content of the information must be credible and the presentation in a well-written, appropriate to-the-masses format. It is not always easy to find such information for your company newsletter, on-line magazine or department fact sheet but the CCHALW would like to connect you with an excellent resource for this purpose. It is the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute which is also known as the CFLRI. You can connect with them at: WWW.CFLRI.CA or (613) 233-5528 for the latest Canadian research facts and figures.

A sample article has been included here to provide you with an example of the type and style of article that is available.

## Coping with stress

The amount of stress we face - and how we handle it - has a real impact on our health. Early signs of unresolved stress include sleeplessness, headaches, irritability, and fatigue. Poorly managed over a long period, stress can lead to health problems such as high blood pressure, ulcers, and heart disease.

The key to preventing problems is not to avoid stress entirely (which isn't possible anyway) but to harness it and know your limits. This means identifying the negative stressors in your life and learning how to cope with them effectively.

One proven way to cope with stress is regular physical activity. Dr. William Ross put it nicely in the book *Life and Health* when he wrote, "Deliberate and appropriate exercise enables modern man to release psychological tension and achieve physical relaxation."

To get the desired effects, it's important to choose the right activities. Do things

you enjoy that suit your routine and schedule. It's counterproductive, to say the least, if you're getting stressed out trying to fit your activity into a busy day.

Pursue your activity three or more times a week and stick with it. Reduced levels of stress and anxiety will stay with you when you have firmly established an activity habit.

Beyond physical activity, there are other ways to cope with the stress and demands of work and family responsibilities. Here are a few suggestions:

**Set priorities:** don't rush. You can be active and busy without being hurried. At work and at home, determine priorities, then strive to accomplish things in both a logical fashion and a reasonable length of time.

**Keep a diary.** Stress can come from not being sure what you want. A diary is a wonderful tool for self-discovery when you record your emotions and experiences - the

good as well as the bad - you can start to see important patterns emerge. You don't have to write in your diary every day, but you should reread it regularly.

**Talk to others.** Problems can seem worse when you keep them to yourself. Make adequate time to deepen friendships, and share your concerns with a trusted friend or relative. This can help you see your situation in a new light, which may be the first step toward a constructive solution. If your problems seem to be getting out of hand, don't hesitate to seek professional counselling.

Finally, **listen to your body.** It will tell you when you're pushing too hard. When warning signs like sleeplessness or fatigue appear, slow down. **Have some fun! Indulge yourself. Enjoy life's little pleasures.**

*Source: reprinted with permission from the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute*

*One of the best sources of inspiration can be the personal successes experienced by personnel within our workplace settings. The following story can be used to motivate employees through its simplicity and down to earth approach. Or in a different manner, health and/or active living professionals can use the story as a template to build a repertoire of success stories in the work setting. The narratives can then be used in a variety of promotional vehicles to provide ideas to those in contemplation of lifestyle change.*

## An active living SUCCESS STORY...

Pierre was 55 years old when he decided to put physical activity back into his life.

Just like many of us, he was very busy, had too little time for himself, had no energy and little motivation to get moving. He had been into sports when he was young, but his life had become too complicated for organized activities...and anyway there was no time.

One day, he was talking to a friend who told him that a mutual acquaintance had just died of a heart attack at 56. That's me thought Pierre, I'll be next! That day, he decided he had better do something. But what? Here's what he did.

He went to his doctor for a check-up and asked her if she could help him get started - this was Pierre's first step toward active living. The doctor gave him a brochure from the Heart and Stroke Foundation and the Handbook for Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living to get him on the right track.

Pierre went home and discovered that he could build activity into his daily life at work, at home, and on the way to work, and he didn't have to join something. He put a simple plan together that he could fit into his day and posted it on the fridge. It simply read: "Today is the first day of the rest of my life. I'm going to walk to the bus every day - that's 10 minutes. Next week I might decide to do more."

Every step Pierre took was progress. He thought about it, asked for advice, read information and reminded himself to try. Soon Pierre was not only walking to work, but after dinner he got into the routine of doing 20 to 30 minutes of some other activity such as walking, skating or swimming at the community recreation centre. He did this with his wife and got her moving as well!

*Source: Health Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living*