

LAUNCH *in*ews

An update on initiatives from Health Canada's Physical Activity Unit towards achieving the joint Federal-Provincial/Territorial target to reduce physical inactivity by 10% by the year 2003

Launch of Canada's Physical Activity Guides for Children & Youth Gleans National Media Attention *Colorful, concise Guides target inactive children and youth*

The key components of Health Canada's latest efforts to help reduce physical inactivity amongst Canada's children and youth populations were released in Edmonton on April 5th to great media fanfare.

"We all have a role to play in encouraging children and youth to lead healthier, more active lives," said the Honourable Anne McLellan, Minister of Health. "The goal of the *Guides* is to provide parents, educators, physicians and community leaders with the information they need to help increase physical activity levels in children and youth, and lay the groundwork for healthy growth and development."

Coverage of the *Guides*' launch was broadcast from coast-to-coast, including key spots on CTV's National News, a prominent article and an editorial in the *Globe & Mail*, as well as making front-page news in major newspapers from the Southam chain, including the *Ottawa Citizen* and the *Edmonton Journal*. The Canadian Press, Broadcast News, and the Reuters Health Information News Service out of New York City also picked up the story.

Health Canada and the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology worked again in partnership to develop *Canada's Physical Activity Guides for Children and Youth*. The *Guides* are strongly supported by the Canadian Paediatric Society and the College of Family Physicians of Canada, as well as key national children and youth organizations and provincial/territorial governments. →



The Hon. Anne McLellan, Minister of Health Canada, was joined by students from Glenora School in Edmonton to launch *Canada's Physical Activity Guides for Children and Youth*.

The key partners were present at the launch event, including guest speakers Dr. Claire LeBlanc of the Canadian Paediatric Society, Dr. Phillip Gardiner of the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology, and Dr. Harold Dion of the College of Family Physicians of Canada.

These first-ever national physical activity guidelines recommend that inactive children and youth **increase** the amount of time they currently spend being physically active by at least 30 minutes per day and **decrease** the time they currently spend sitting still, such as watching TV, playing computer games and surfing the Internet, by at least 30 minutes per day.

The increase in physical activity should include a combination of moderate activity — brisk walking, skating and bike riding — as well as vigorous activity, such as running and playing soccer.

Over several months, children and youth should try to build up to at least 90 minutes of daily physical activity and reduce by 90 minutes daily the amount of non-active time. The guidelines recommend that children and youth



Canada's Physical Activity Guides for Children and Youth recommend that inactive children and youth reduce sedentary activity such as watching television or playing computer games, starting with 30 minutes a day.

Highlights of the Children & Youth Guides

Products include:

- *Guide* with recommendations for increasing physical activity and tips for getting active

To be launched in the fall:

- Detailed activity Handbook presented in a magazine/comic book style;
- Parent's Guide;
- Teacher's Guide; and
- Interactive tool that motivates kids and lets them monitor their own daily physical activity.

accumulate this increase in physical activity per day in periods of at least 5 to 10 minutes.

Research has shown that more than half of Canadian children are not active enough for optimal growth and development. From 1981 to 1996, the prevalence of overweight doubled and obesity tripled for both boys and girls.

Guide products aim to raise awareness; stimulate behaviour change

Both *Guides* aim to create awareness and understanding about the importance of physical activity to healthy growth and development. In addition, in concert with other support resources, the *Guides* aim to facilitate and increase levels of physical activity amongst inactive children and youth.

The *Guides* encourage steps toward behavioural change, increasing the likelihood that children and youth will adopt physical activity as an important part of their daily lives.

The *Guides* are targeted not only at inactive children and youth, but also their key intermediaries such as parents, educators, doctors, and recreation leaders.

The *Guides* are only one component of several that have been developed to increase physical activity levels amongst children and youth.

In the fall, the remaining *Guide* products, including a Handbook (magazine/comic book style), parent's guide, teacher's guide and an interactive tool will be launched to support the intermediaries in their quest to engage children and youth in physical activity. →

Early intervention key to life-long health and well-being

Clearly, the rapid increase in overweight and obesity, combined with low levels of physical activity, represent a serious threat to the health of Canada's children and youth. Regular physical activity is seen as essential for healthy physiological and psychological development during childhood and youth.

Childhood is also an opportune time to lay the foundation for life-long values and habits leading to an active, healthy lifestyle into adulthood and later life.

Guides reflect latest research on the activity needs of children & youth

The *Guides* were developed with the assistance of an Advisory Committee, co-chaired by Health Canada's Morina Reece and CSEP's Mike Sharratt, Ph.D., with representation from the provinces/territories and key agencies with an interest in supporting physical activity for children and youth.

The content for the *Guide* products was based on information culled from two scientific background papers (biological paper by Dr. Oded Bar-Or and psycho-social paper by Larry Brawley, Ph.D.), nationally and internationally reviewed, as well as the consolidation and synthesis of market research on children and youth.

Focus tests were also conducted on positioning, messaging and look to ensure their appeal to the two age groups and a youth advisory committee was also established for direction and feedback.

The Canadian Paediatric Society and the College of Family Physicians of Canada played strategic roles in disseminating the products to primary intermediaries such as paediatricians and family doctors across the country.

For more *Guide* info, please call toll-free 1-888-334-9769 or visit <www.healthcanada.ca/paguide>.

Three Times a Charm

CSEP Partners with Health Canada on Newest Versions of Physical Activity Guides

The Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (CSEP) has partnered with Health Canada for a third time to help address the issue of physical inactivity in Canada.

Considered Canada's scientific authority on exercise physiology and fitness, CSEP worked in tandem with the Physical Activity Unit to produce the latest versions of *Canada's Physical Activity Guides to Healthy Active Living* – one for children and the other for youth – as well as the pending *Guide* resources.

CSEP was also a key partner in the development and launch of the original version of *Canada's Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living*, as well as a second version geared specifically towards older adults aged 55 and over.

CSEP is a voluntary organization composed of professionals interested and involved in the scientific study of exercise physiology, exercise biochemistry, fitness and health.

Having CSEP involved brings a level of expertise to the table on the generation, synthesis, transfer and application of knowledge and research related to exercise physiology (encompassing physical activity, fitness, health and human performance).



More specifically, CSEP's guiding principles are:

- To promote and foster the growth of the highest quality research and education in exercise physiology;
- To provide a national forum (committees and networks) for Canadians whose interests coincide with exercise physiology;
- To recognize the regional diversity of Canada and offer equal opportunity for persons within CSEP regardless of age, gender, race or disability; and
- To apply the knowledge derived from research in exercise physiology.

Originally known as the Canadian Association of Sport Sciences, CSEP was founded in 1967 at the Pan American Games held in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

The organization was the result of four years of cooperative efforts by the Canadian Medical Association and the Canadian Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance.

For more information about CSEP, please visit <www.csep.ca>.

Canadian Paediatric Society New Partner in Promoting Physical Activity for Healthier Kids

The Canadian Paediatric Society's (CPS) Advisory Committee on Healthy Active Living for Children and Youth has developed a multi-year strategy to combat the growing problem of physical inactivity among Canadian kids.

Called 'Healthy Kids, Active Kids', the national strategy aims to encourage paediatricians to promote healthy active living in their practices. The strategy was funded in part by Health Canada.

In addition, the Committee worked on a position statement for physicians, which was released during the CPS' annual meeting in Toronto and published in the May/June issue of *Paediatrics & Child Health* – a peer review journal sent out to 15,500 Canadian paediatricians and family doctors.

The May/June issue of the journal was devoted to healthy active living, including articles on paediatric obesity, diabetes, eating disorders, and osteoporosis. Through the CPS, paediatricians also have access to patient education materials that they can share with parents, children and youth.

"The disease process leading to osteoporosis, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease begins in childhood if physical activity levels are insufficient," explains Dr. Claire LeBlanc, a paediatric sports medicine specialist and member of the National Guide Advisory Committee. "We can prevent these diseases through an active lifestyle."

The CPS has officially endorsed the new *Guides*, and will incorporate the *Guides* and other materials into their strategy. Paediatricians and family physicians are

healthy kids



active kids

expected to play a key role in spreading the message about the need for children and youth to learn healthy activity habits from an early age.

Over the next several years, the CPS will be developing initiatives to encourage paediatricians to educate parents and patients about the benefits of physical activity, good nutrition, and an active lifestyle.

For example, a series of professional education events was developed for the annual meeting in Toronto (June 12-16, 2002). There was a workshop on how paediatricians can promote physical activity in their practices, and a concurrent session on physical activity for specific populations, such as children and youth with obesity.

For more information on the CPS, visit <www.cps.ca> .



Dr. Claire LeBlanc represented the Canadian Paediatric Society at the news conference for the launch of *Canada's Physical Activity Guides for Children and Youth*.

'Physical Activity for Health'

Theme of World Health Day 2002

World Health Day (WHD) is celebrated each year on April 7 by the 191 member countries of the World Health Organization (WHO).

WHO established this important observance to provide a forum for discussion regarding various health challenges worldwide. Each year, a new focus is selected for World Health Day to highlight a public health issue of global concern.

This year's theme — *Physical Activity for Health* — underscores the growing recognition among public health experts worldwide that physical activity can and should play an increased role in improving and maintaining the health of the global population.

WHO believes that this is the time for the global debate to be directed as much towards *prevention* as to *cure*. With an increased focus on prevention, the entire public health community stands to gain.

WHD efforts worldwide focussed on the importance of physical activity to health and quality of life, as well as highlighted the many benefits of an active lifestyle in all cultures.

WHD stimulates global debate on physical inactivity

Through World Health Day, WHO is seeking to stimulate a global health debate on the epidemiological shift in the global burden of disease and the factors that are fuelling this change.

In most parts of the world, non-communicable diseases have become a major epidemic. This is due, in large part, to a rapid transition in lifestyles leading to reduced physical activity, changing diets and increased tobacco use.

This trend is present in all societies, rich and poor, developed and developing.

Physical inactivity is a major cause of cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and obesity. WHO estimates that lack of activity leads to more than 2 million deaths per year.

It is likely that one-third of cancers can be prevented by maintaining physical activity, a healthy diet, and normal weight throughout one's life.

Inactivity fuels global increases in heart disease and diabetes

A combination of lack of physical activity, improper diet, and tobacco use are estimated to be the cause of up to 80% of premature coronary heart disease.

In countries as diverse as China, Finland and the US, studies have shown that even relatively modest lifestyle changes (increased physical activity and dietary modification) are sufficient to prevent the development of almost 60% of Type II diabetes cases.

In Canada, two-thirds of our population is not sufficiently active to benefit their health. Physical inactivity resulted in approximately 21,000 premature deaths in 1997 and costs the health-care system at least \$2.1 billion annually in direct health-care costs.

Working together for awareness and change

A shift in perspective is necessary to get people moving. This year's WHD challenged individuals to find activities that they enjoy and incorporate them into their daily lives.

Community leaders also need to develop innovative ways of drawing people into physical activity. Tackling inactivity with multi-component interventions will confront the challenge most effectively.

Based on the premise that there is strength in numbers, the success of WHD 2002 required the participation of many organizations and individuals. The benefit of partnerships and collaborative efforts is that resources and talents of a multitude of people can be leveraged.

It is important to raise awareness about the benefits of physical activity, collaborate to change policies that deal with access, and work to create environments that are more conducive to physical activity.

For more information, please visit the World Health Day website at <www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/whd/index.html>.



Children from Glenora Public School demonstrate their hockey skills for the media during the *Guide* launch.

College of Family Physicians Implements Trio of Physical Activity Initiatives

The College of Family Physicians of Canada (CFPC) has implemented a trio of initiatives as part of its continuing efforts to motivate and educate its membership about the key roles they can play in improving levels of physical activity in Canada.

First of all, the January issue of the CFPC’s journal, *Canadian Family Physician*, was devoted to the theme ‘Active about physical activity.’

The issue featured a key editorial by well-known activity advocate Dr. Andrew Pipe entitled, ‘Get Active About Physical Activity — Ask, advise, assist: get your patients moving.’ Dr. Pipe is Chair of the CFPC’s Physical Activity and Health Strategy Coordinating Committee.

Through the College, doctors across Canada are being urged to write physical activity prescriptions for their patients as a more effective way of tackling the problem of obesity among Canadians, in addition to a myriad of other inactivity-related chronic diseases.

Other sections of the journal included articles on using physical activity to prevent cardiovascular disease and a discussion on whether or not counselling helps patients get active.

The idea for the activity-themed issue was motivated by the fact that researchers have found that the effectiveness of physical activity counseling interventions for overweight patients can be improved if family physicians add written materials, especially if provided in the form of a ‘prescription’.

The likelihood that patients will increase their physical activity levels may be further enhanced through the use of simple evaluations to assess fitness capacity and guide physical activity prescriptions.



New Medical Education Initiative

Through its *Physical Activity and Health Strategy*, the College is also implementing a new medical education initiative. Currently, the curriculum of medical schools and residency programs does not cover exercise medicine or physical activity counselling.

To address the health impact of physical inactivity, exercise medicine needs to be given some emphasis in the training of new physicians. Therefore, the Strategy is currently developing educational initiatives for teaching in the medical curriculum. The goal of the initiative is to introduce physicians-in-training to the science of exercise, the medical aspects

of exercise, and how to counsel patients to become more physically active.

Doctors Promoting Active Living (DPAL) Initiative

Recognizing that there are barriers to physical activity counselling, such as time constraints and lack of financial incentives or standard protocols, the College continues to develop appropriate educational and awareness initiatives under the Strategy that will support physicians in counselling patients and prescribing physical activity.

Included in this thrust is the recognition that it’s important for patients to have access to physical activity that is safe and attractive, if physicians are to be effective in promoting healthy behaviours to their patients.

The Doctors Promoting Active Living (DPAL) pilot will focus on local family physician champions taking a community leadership role to raise awareness, increase knowledge, as well as promote attitudes and practices that contribute to improved health through regular physical activity.

The pilot will measure the reach of champions and their ability to disseminate information and promote active living to family physicians and their communities across Canada.

For more information on the College, visit their website at <www.cfpc.ca>.

Successful Whistler Conference Catalyst for More Effective Messaging on Physical Activity & Health

Against the backdrop of Canada's winter wonderland, an international gathering of distinguished scientists and health advocates met December 9-11 for the Whistler 2001 Conference, entitled, *Communicating Physical Activity & Health Messages: Science into Practice*.

Hosted by Health Canada and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Conference was also supported by the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, the University of Alberta, the University of Waterloo, University College of the Fraser Valley, and ParticipACTION.

Whistler 2001 followed on the heels of an earlier symposium in Toronto in 2000, when scientists met to clarify the issues surrounding 'dose-response' as they related to the role of physical activity in the prevention of disease, disability and premature death.

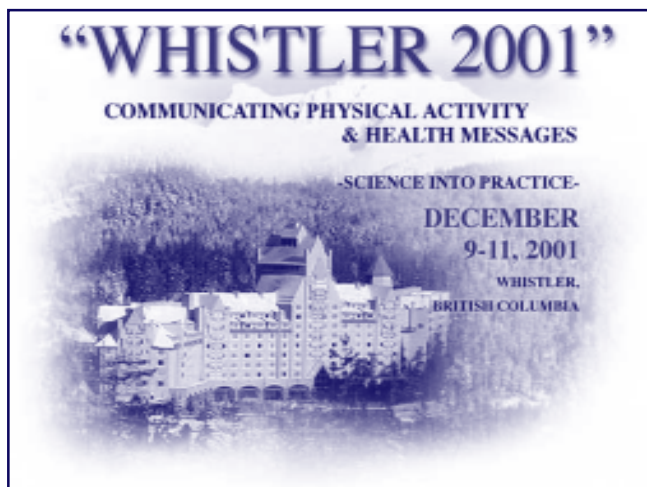
At Whistler, more than 350 health promotion professionals from Canada, the US and over 20 other countries met to discuss the research findings from the Toronto event and examine the implications of these findings for future communications strategies, tools and health-related messages regarding physical activity.

This time, the dose-response issue was examined from a communications perspective, given that the general public is very interested in knowing how much physical activity is required to achieve desirable health outcomes.

Through a variety of guest speaker presentations and workshops, participants were given insight into where they need to go from here in order to provide the general public with clear and concise physical activity messages.

The key thrust of the international 'meeting of the minds' was to move scientific enquiry out of the laboratory and into homes across the United States and Canada. More specifically, the primary goals of Whistler 2001 were:

- To review and discuss the issues and findings from the consensus report of the 2000 Dose-Response Symposium with specific reference to future recommendations concerning physical activity and health; and →



“Physical activity is fundamental to healthy human development. It is a cornerstone of health. It is a natural requirement and need for all people. It is a resource for living happy, healthy and productive lives. There is virtually no human condition that cannot be improved by increased physical activity.”

— Excerpt from a keynote speech by Dr. Wendy Watson-Wright, former Associate Assistant Deputy Minister of Health Canada's Population and Public Health Branch



Whistler Opening Session (left to right): Dr. Art Quinney, University of Alberta and Dr. Becky Lankenau, US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Co-Chairs of Whistler Organizing Committee; Dr. Wendy Watson-Wright, former Associate Assistant Deputy Minister, Population and Public Health Branch, Health Canada, Keynote Speaker

- To examine the implications of the consensus report with a view to developing future communications strategies, tools and health related messages pertaining to physical activity.

Health Canada and the CDC have been working collaboratively for the last two years to address the serious health issue of physical inactivity in Canada and the United States.

This collaboration is resulting in mutual benefits from sharing leading-edge research, health promotion strategies and resources to reducing this serious health threat for most North Americans.

For more information on the Whistler Conference and the Dose-Response Symposium, please visit www.participation.com and http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/English/for_you/whistler.html.



Health Minister Anne McLellan confers with Dr. Harold Dion of the College of Family Physicians of Canada during the news conference to launch the *Physical Activity Guides for Children and Youth*.

Highlights of Whistler 2001 Conference Report (prepared by Dr. Roy Shephard):

- 30 minutes of accumulated moderate intensity physical activity on most days reduces premature all-cause mortality and the risk of several chronic diseases; however, a larger total volume of activity (i.e., 60 minutes) is probably needed to prevent weight gain in populations with a low base-rate of energy expenditure;
- Vigorous activity probably confers additional health benefits (although augmented risk of injury must be considered), while resistance and flexibility exercises are also needed to counter losses of muscle mass and mobility with ageing;
- Transmitting messages that will secure compliance and adherence to physical activity guidelines is a continuing challenge — several psychosocial interventions appear to be successful in optimal conditions, but evidence of their ‘real world’ effectiveness is limited;
- There is a need for ecological models that explicitly address the environmental determinants of physical activity;
- Social marketing and communications experts must translate scientific data into messages and sound bites that are appropriate for the general public;
- The health information field is already cluttered, and it is critical to know the characteristics of the target audience to boost the chances for long-term behavior change;
- Electronic media hold great promise as communication tools, but problems of quality control and ‘cyber-babble’ may limit their value for the general public; and
- Ultimately, hearts must be captured before minds — the perceived benefits must be presented clearly, and strategically integrated with other messages and environmental influences in a sustainable fashion.

(Note: The full report can be viewed on the Whistler website at www.participation.com)

SummerActive 2002

Better Than Ever

Popular annual campaign integrated tobacco-free and healthy eating messages while encouraging active lifestyles



The SummerActive Management Team built on the many success of last year's efforts by introducing enhancements that increased the annual campaign's effectiveness and encouraged new partnerships and alliances for the delivery of the 2002 initiative.

Capitalizing on last year's momentum, SummerActive 2002 – which ran between May 8th and June 21st — took the healthy active living focus one step further by integrating messages about tobacco-free living and healthy eating into the campaign.

The move to expand the focus of the campaign into the realm of tobacco control and nutrition was in keeping with Health Canada's intentions to align and integrate health issues across various interventions. The 2002 messages were evidence-based and supported the role of physical activity associated with healthy eating and in the prevention of smoking (initiation), smoking cessation, as well as relapse prevention.

The Management Team developed strategic initiatives and implementation opportunities so that the campaign would help to achieve the objectives and advance the agendas of organizations committed to advancements in important health issues.

Did You Know?

- SummerActive is a major national, community-based communications campaign designed to increase awareness about the importance of physical activity to health, as well as a broad range of social, political and economic issues.
- The annual campaign supports the efforts of provincial/territorial governments, national organizations and community agencies in their efforts to increase public awareness about the benefits of adopting an active lifestyle.
- SummerActive is guided by a three-year communications and implementation strategy that was developed by Health Canada in consultation with provinces and territories, NGOs and private-sector organizations.
- The strategy is intended to optimize the contribution of SummerActive to the joint federal-provincial/territorial target to reduce physical activity in Canada by 10% by the year 2003.

2001 campaign was ripe with results; built momentum for 2002

SummerActive 2001 was successful on several fronts. The launch and related media relations activities produced more than 28 million media impressions throughout country, substantially expanding the awareness of SummerActive and the reach of its physical activity messages.

The national SummerActive website attracted over 130,000 page views over the six-week campaign. Clearly these initiatives have had an impact. On the 2002 campaign, Decima Research reports that about 8% of Canadians (2.2 million) are aware of SummerActive and, of this group, one in five says they or someone else in their household has become more physically active as a result of the campaign.

An ideal partnership opportunity for organizations fostering healthy lifestyles

SummerActive is a terrific mechanism to enhance or support a broad range of physical activity initiatives. By linking with the campaign, partner organizations benefitted from SummerActive media relations activities and accessed SummerActive public-service announcements targeting specific populations settings and age groups. →



Dr. Phillip Gardiner, President of the Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology speaks about his organization's role in the Guides' development during the launch event in Edmonton.

Furthermore, partnership in the campaign allowed organizations to promote their messages in concert with the SummerActive communications platform. This was achieved either through linking to the national website, or creating specifically tailored communiqués delivered through SummerActive networks.

SummerActive toolkit teeming with effective health promotion resources

The SummerActive campaign provided leaders with access to self-help tools, tip sheets and other resources relevant to the promotion of physical activity messages, programs and events.

Partner organizations were encouraged to take full advantage of these tools and to make use of the attractive SummerActive display and promotional materials presenting information about the benefits of an active lifestyle. Sample articles promoting physical activity and related themes were electronically available and could be easily adapted or pasted directly into newsletters and fliers.

More details about this year's campaign are available on the national website at <www.summeractive.canoe.ca> — log on now to see how you and your organization were involved in SummerActive 2002!

New Physical Activity Policy in the Works

A new physical activity policy is in the works, according to a recent announcement by Dr. Wendy Watson-Wright, former Associate Assistant Deputy Minister of Health Canada's Population and Public Health Branch.

"I am pleased to advise you that Health Canada has begun developing the framework for a new physical activity policy that will draw significantly from our work with the provinces and territories and national organizations," she said during the Whistler 2001 Conference entitled *Communicating Physical Activity and Health Messages: Science into Practice*.

The new policy will set out the unique and essential federal roles for helping Canadians improve their health through regular physical activity. It will be based on the foundation of compelling scientific evidence that acknowledges the key role that physical activity plays in improving health and in preventing disease, disability and premature death.

Dr. Watson-Wright went on to explain that the process of developing the new policy is now officially underway, and that Health Canada will advance their thinking on the issue by consulting with the provinces and territories, national organizations and a variety of noted experts on the subject of physical activity.

Stay tuned to future issues of *LaunchNews* for updates on the progress of the policy's development.

LAUNCHnews

Thanks for reading this issue of *LaunchNews*! *LaunchNews* is produced on an ad hoc basis to keep you up-to-date on the latest news and initiatives from Health Canada's Physical Activity Unit. If you have questions, comments or suggestions for *LaunchNews*, please contact Claire Barrette by e-mail (claire_barrette@hc-sc.gc.ca) or by fax (613-941-6666).



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