

Avenue II **Safety** & **Health Week** Newsletter

May 6-11, 2024

Together we can create **safe workplaces** and **communities**

Volume 3, Issue 3

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Nutrition & hydration

Maintaining a balanced diet and adequate hydration is not only good for our physical health but also for our psychological health. Being improperly nourished or hydrated can cause or contribute to existing health issues such as vitamin and mineral deficiencies, decline in bone mass, poor muscle development, diabetes, weakened immune system, cardiovascular disease, gastrointestinal and organ function, fatigue, hair loss, rashes, bleeding gums, tooth loss, decreased brain function, unhealthy weight. Any or all of these can also contribute to anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, mood changes, hallucinations, paranoia, and other psychiatric disorders.

Following Canada's Food Guide is a good starting point for a balanced diet. The Guide in the past focussed on serving sizes but this changed in 2019. Instead, the focus is on overall daily intake which should be 50% vegetables and fruits, 25% whole grain foods, and 25% protein foods, with water being the beverage of choice. What you actually eat is important too and the Guide can help you with recommendations on healthy eating like staying away from excessive sugar and salt. Getting a thorough and regular check-up with your medical practitioner that includes bloodwork is important to determine if you have any health issues that may be dietary related. Also consulting a dietitian may be of benefit to help you get on track with recommendations and support.

Keeping properly hydrated is an on-going concern for many people. Recommendations from the Mayo Clinic in the US are between 2.7 and 3.7 liters of fluid (or 11 ½ to 15 ½ cups) per day, depending on your level of activity or exercise, environment or weather, overall health, or if you are pregnant or breastfeeding. About 20% of daily fluid intake usually comes from food and the rest is from beverages.

Fitness

After a long and sometimes difficult day at work, the last thing you may want to do is ... EXERCISE! Instead, that couch may be calling you. Exercising and maintaining an appropriate level of fitness does not have to be a battle. Choose things that are fun to do and do them with someone you enjoy spending time with. That could be a family member, friend, your pet dog, or even yourself.

Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines recommend that adults 18-64 years of age should accumulate at least 150 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity per week, in bouts of 10 minutes or more. It is also beneficial to add muscle and bone strengthening activities using major muscle groups, at least 2 days per week. More physical activity provides greater health benefits.

Include activities such as hiking, brisk walking, bike riding, jogging, cross-country skiing, snow shoeing, dancing, skating, or swimming, where you sweat a little (or a lot!) and breathe harder. Join a class or a

sports team, try some yoga or tai chi, kick around a soccer ball with your kids or grandkids. You may want to join a gym but that may be expensive so look for low-cost or free activities that are FUN to do. Remember that before you engage in any physical activities, consult your medical practitioner.

Work-life balance

Having a healthy work-life balance is important for one's physical and emotional health and helps you to manage the demands of everyday life. It is not necessarily about splitting time equally, but rather about feeling fulfilled and content with both aspects of your life. Work-life conflict occurs when the overall demands of one role makes it more difficult to participate in the other role.

Health Canada has identified 4 broad categories associated with work-life balance: Role overload; work-to-family interference; family-to-work interference; and caregiver strain. Working in a helping profession that involves a lot of giving to others may affect the work-life balance because of over-commitment or over-dedication to the job and this can result in a sacrifice of other important aspects of life away from work. On the flip side, having to spend more time on other roles outside of work can lead to higher absenteeism and lower quality job performance.

You may feel drained, not able to cope or not able to sleep, be sad, angry, irritable or not care, use more alcohol or other substances, feel depressed, empty or useless, experience joint or muscle pain or gastrointestinal issues. This may suggest looking at your work-life balance. Ask yourself the following questions. Do you:

- Eat well and drink sufficient water
- Get enough sleep
- Engage in activities that positively impact your life
- Work set hours and avoid checking on work when you are away from the job
- Build downtime into your daily schedule
- Make time to do the things that you enjoy
- Realistically determine what you can accomplish in a day
- Take breaks to stretch, walk, listen to music, read
- Unplug from technology once in a while
- Make time for family
- Have a hobby?

If you answered yes to all of the above, then you likely have a good work-life balance but if you are experiencing some symptoms, there may be other issues that require professional intervention. However, if you answered no to some of the questions, take a look at how you might be able to slowly incorporate even one of the missing items in order to achieve a better work-life balance. If you need some help or guidance, talk to your medical practitioner for a referral to a counselling service or access one of the many counselling services in the community. Also check to see if you are eligible for services through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at work.

Compassionate Culture

The Dalai Lama defined compassion as “a sensitivity to suffering in self and others, with a commitment to try to alleviate and prevent it.” Giving compassion, receiving compassion, and allowing yourselves to experience self-compassion are all very beneficial to your mental health. Giving compassion can ease depression, spike happiness, be a catalyst for optimism, and increase selfless satisfaction. Receiving

compassion can have calming effects and release oxytocin, the feel-good hormone. It helps us to bond with others. Self-compassion leads to being more self-accepting, improving emotional resilience, having fewer self-judgements, increasing happiness, and having a more positive mood.

How can we be compassionate co-workers? When we find or create deliberate opportunities for real connections at work, we increase the opportunities for trust and openness. We can practice compassion with our colleagues by expressing genuine interest and concern, actively listening without judgement, and validating their experiences and emotions.

How can you show compassion for yourself? Everyone has bad days sometimes. You can show yourself compassion by setting reasonable expectations and not define yourself by these challenges. Show yourself the same level of compassion, patience and kindness that you would show your colleagues.

[Additional resources](#)

Canada's Food Guide, www.food-guide.canada.ca/en/

Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines, www.heartandstroke.ca/-/media/pdf-files/healthy-living/csep_guidelines_handbook.pdf?rev=-1

City of Thunder Bay Biking, Walking and Trails, www.thunderbay.ca/en/recreation/biking-walking-and-trails.aspx

Thunder Bay Hiking Association, www.tbha.ca

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/psychosocial/worklife_balance.html

Workplace Strategies for Mental Health, www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com/resources/work-life-balance-tips

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

TELUS Health One – Avenue II's EAP provider