

Featuring: Activity Overload and Stress in Children

SECTION 1: WHAT'S NEW?

The Ontario Education Minister has introduced a proposed **Healthy Food for Healthy Schools Act, 2007** that would, if passed, drop trans fats from food and beverages sold in school cafeterias.

UNESCO Focus on Health Literacy

International Literacy Day (ILD) 2007 is placing special focus on the vital relationship between literacy and health. This is also the thematic emphasis of the 2007-2008 biennium of the United Nations Literacy Decade. The activities include a special declaration by the Director General of UNESCO.

National Anti-Drug Strategy Prevention Plan

introduced: The Canadian Association for School Health is a participating member of the National Drug Prevention Advisory Committee. The Substance Abuse Prevention and Schools national project (co-led by CASH and the CCSA) has produced a summary of the evidence that will serve as a basis for a variety of efforts geared to helping support evidence-informed practice in school-based and school-linked substance abuse.

<http://www.safehealthyschools.org/initiatives/initiatives.htm> (Select Substance Abuse Project).

US Congress Responds to Aging Schools

From the National Association of Secondary School Principals. It's no secret that America's schools are in need of repair. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), 73% of public schools were built between 1950 and 1969, or earlier.

Congress Considers Ban on Unhealthy Food in Schools

Congress is considering the broadest effort ever to limit what children eat: a national ban on selling candy; sugary soda; and salty, fatty food in school snack bars, vending machines, and a-la-carte cafeteria lines. *Boston Globe*, 12/2/07

SCHOOL HEALTH CONFERENCE & SYMPOSIA

2008

Sheraton Four Points Hotel
& Conference Centre

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Ottawa-Gatineau

April 20-23, 2008

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for more info visit:

www.safehealthyschools.org/shconferences

Section 2: RESEARCH, REPORTS & SCHOOL HEALTH KNOWLEDGE

Research Roundup

- Safe schools in the context of school improvement. (2007) Hamilton Fish Institute's National Conference on Safe Schools and Communities, Conference Proceedings. <http://gwired.gwu.edu/hamfish/annualconference/2007/>
- Parent and home involvement in schools (rev. 2007). Center for Mental Health in Schools. <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/parenthome/parent1.pdf>
- Two new updated evaluation resources: i) After-School

Fewer Eighth-Graders Smoking, Using Drugs

Smoking and illicit drug use among eighth-grade students in the United States declined over the past year, according to the 2007 Monitoring the Future survey released Tuesday by the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA).

<http://www.forbes.com/forbeslife/health/feeds/hscout/2007/12/11/hscout610804.html>

Students Drawn to Health Care Policy Challenges

The popularity of public health schools, health economics, health law and health business programs is rising, while political science and history departments are offering numerous courses focusing on health care and medical issues.

http://www.kaisernetwork.org/daily_reports/report_index.cfm?DR_ID=49341

Teen dating violence leads to risky health behavior

Teens who have suffered violence at the hands of an intimate partner are more likely to display a number of risky health behaviors, from disordered eating to suicidal thoughts, research shows.

<http://in.reuters.com/article/health/idINCOL06795220071210>

Food makers in Europe volunteer to cut ads directed at children

Leading companies in the European food and beverage industry said Tuesday that they would voluntarily change their policies on advertising for children by the end of next year, setting standards on nutritional content to encourage more healthful lifestyles.

<http://www.iht.com/articles/2007/12/11/technology/adban.php>

School Health Policies and Programs Study 2006

SHPPS 2006 provides an updated description of school health programs nationwide. It is the most comprehensive assessment of school health programs ever undertaken, and it provides current information at the state, district, school, and classroom levels on the characteristics of health education, physical educa-

programs and Addressing Barriers to Learning (rev. 2007). Center for Mental Health in Schools
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/afterschool/afterschool.pdf> ii)

- Evaluation and accountability: related to mental health in schools (Technical Aid) - <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/evalaccount/evalmh.pdf>. This packet addresses multiple levels of intervention: student outcomes, program effectiveness, system change, overall impact on a school and community.
- The School Health Programs department supports NSBA's commitment to help school policymakers and educators make informed decisions about health issues affecting the academic achievement and healthy development of students and the effective operation of schools.

You can access information about NSBA's work on school health issues, including "101" packets of information on key topics, the School Health Resource Database, current news on health topics that are relevant to school leaders, NSBA health-related publications, and links to relevant websites in the sidebar to the left. In the sidebar to the right, you'll find the latest reports and data as well as announcements of special events to guide effective decision-making around a wide range of school health policies and programs.

http://www.nsba.org/site/page_SH_home.asp?TRACKID=&CID=1113&DID=12019

- Strategies for Addressing Asthma Within a Coordinated School Health Program

Asthma is a leading chronic illness among children and youth in the United States. In 2004, 5.1 million school-aged children and youth were reported to currently have asthma and 3.2 million had an asthma episode or attack within the previous year.¹ On average, in a classroom of 30 children, about 3 are likely to have asthma.
<http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/asthma/>

- It was surely the bombshell study of the year. Obesity, far from endangering health, was associated with lower overall mortality than being underweight or even of normal weight, claimed a CDC report published last month in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.
http://www.nationalreviewofmedicine.com/issue/2007/12_15/4_patients_practice01_20.html

tion and activity, health services, mental health and social services, nutrition services, healthy and safe school environment, faculty and staff health promotion, and family and community involvement.

Resources for School Health

- The Center for Health and Health Care in Schools (CHHCS) has updated its popular fact sheet, Childhood Overweight: What the Research Tells Us. The fact sheet includes findings from articles published through July 2007. To view the latest version, see: <http://www.healthinschools.org/News-Room/Fact-sheets/ChildhoodObesityUpdated07.aspx>
- From the (US) Center on Health and Healthcare in schools an in-depth analysis of emerging issues in health in schools: Bullying--Is It Part of Growing Up, or Part of School Violence?
CHHCS E-Journal: Bullying--It's Not Just at School Any More
Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence: Safe Communities, Safe Schools
Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence: Bullying Prevention: Recommendations for Schools
HRSA: Stop Bullying Now

For a look at some Canadian related resources and initiatives underway related to safe and caring schools see: <http://www.safehealthyschools.org/trends.htm> (select "Safe Schools" from the left panel).

- Skills-Based Health Education Tools
Resources website that teaches methods, strategies and practical guides on general skills-based health education, malaria, drugs, violence, AIDS, hygiene and nutrition. Source: UNESCO, Paris Year: 2004
- Koffi...la rue...les drogues
This educative booklet tells the story of Koffi and his friends, confronted to the reality of drugs consumption. Designed as a support for information and awareness activities, it informs at-risk street children about drugs consumption, risky behaviors, causes and possibilities of quitting. Source: UNESCO, Paris Year: 2003
- Creating an Environment for Emotional and Social Well-Being: An important responsibility of a Health-Promoting and Child Friendly School
This document is profiled to help teachers, students and parents create a positive psycho-social climate in their school as a means to improve school quality and the mental and physical well-being of young people. It is intended for school administrators, teachers, community leaders and members of school health teams. Source: WHO/ UNESCO/UNICEF/EDC/World Bank/PCD and Education International Year: 2003
- Active & Free, Young Women, Physical Activity and Tobacco The Canadian Association for the Advancement of Women and Sport and Physical Activity (CAAWS), has released a practical, hands-on tool to help teachers, recreation leaders, parents, coaches, health promoters and others to encourage a healthy lifestyle for young women by keeping them physically active and tobacco-free for life. Active & Free, Young Women, Physical Activity and Tobacco is specifically targeted to assist leaders who care about young women's health.
- Ndaawin Project - The Ndaawin Project was culturally-based intervention aimed at preventing the sexual exploitation of children and youth in Winnipeg.
http://www.safecanada.ca/link_e.asp?c=2&t=14&lid=8327&e=1

- Materials from the Nova Scotia Best Practices initiative include [A Framework for A Best Practices Approach to Health Promotion](#), which presents 15 core components of health promotion, sets of questions for critical reflection, case studies, exercises and activities, lists of additional resources. There is an accompanying [brochure](#) which provides an overview of the Framework
- [Talking Back To Grownups: Healthy Children, Healthy Communities - a report on the social determinants of health and middle childhood in Canada](#)
This resource is the concluding report to the research that the Healthy Children, Healthy Communities project conducted between May 2006 and March 2007. Throughout this time, the project team traveled to 12 communities across Canada engaging with child health stakeholders and with young people themselves in order to understand the perceptions and priorities which exist around the health of children (age 9-12). In addition, UNA-Canada surveyed 1200 Canadian adults to understand how they are thinking about the health of this age group. The study showcases the social determinants of health that are having the largest impact on children's lives, such as parental involvement and attachment to the community and provides recommendations for tackling health disparities from a population health perspective.
- [Participation in high school activities lower risk of smoking](#)
The U.S. NEWSWIRE (Dec 6 2007) reports that researchers from the Abramson Cancer Center of the University of Pennsylvania reported today that students who participate in high school sports or individual physical activity are less likely to smoke than their classmates. The new study indicates that the protective effect of participation extends at least three years beyond graduation. The Penn team discovered, however, that girls do not derive the same level of protection from school sports as do boys. Daniel Rodriguez, PhD, Research Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, reported that an adolescent's self-assessment and sense of physical competence was an important aspect in smoking prevention. Students who feel successful continue to participate and are less likely to start negative behaviors. Given the data, parents should try to make an effort to get their children involved in organized activities - whether it is a physical sport, like track and field, or some other organized activity, like the chess team - and that they teach them how to properly evaluate their own skills. It is important that children learn to compare their current skills or performance to their past performance and not to that of their teammates or opponents. That way they can feel good about their skills, even if they are not the best at something.

FEATURE ARTICLE

Activity Overload and Stress In Children

Overcommitment: To bind or obligate (oneself, for example) beyond the capacity for realization.

Overcommitted is a term used frequently by adults to explain their over-stressed state. But does this term apply to children and adolescents as well? Can being involved in too many activities (at school and extracurricular) lead to excess stress? Does overbooking a child's weekly schedule lead to burnout? What are the downsides of involving kids in too many enriching activities and of keeping idle hands busy?

"The American Academy of Pediatrics says what children really need for healthy development is more good, old-fashioned playtime...Numerous studies have shown that unstructured play has many benefits. It can help children become creative, discover their own passions, develop problem-solving skills, relate to others and adjust to school settings, the academy report says."

<http://www.speedofcreativity.org/2006/10/09/more-recess-fewer-tests-structured-activities-and-homework-please/>

"Children who never have time to invite friends over or play at a friend's house, who never go to the playground or play outside, who never ride bicycles or go for a walk, who never engage in pretend play or work a puzzle or build something or engage in any other form of free play probably have schedules that are too full".

<http://georgiafaces.caes.uga.edu/pdf/3169.pdf>

Activity Overload

- Monday night: soccer practice.
- Tuesday night: ballet class.
- Wednesday night: Scouts.
- Thursday night: piano.
- Friday night: basketball game.
- Saturday night: gymnastics.
- Sunday night: youth group

http://www.azcentral.com/families/articles/0830fam_overextend.html

Childhood Stress

"Many professionals feel that a number of children are too busy and do not have time to play creatively or relax after school. Kids who begin to complain about the number of activities they are involved in or refuse to go to activities may be signaling to their parents that they are too busy. It's a good idea to talk with your child about how he or she is feeling about after-school activities. If he or she complains, talk about the pros and cons of quitting one of the activities. If quitting isn't an option, talk about ways that you can help your child manage his or her time and responsibilities so that they don't create so much anxiety."

<http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/feelings/stress.html>

Activity Overload. Are Kids Doing Too Much?

"Some busy, active kids seem to thrive on a schedule that requires a Rolodex and spreadsheet to keep straight. Others are overwhelmed, heading for burnout at the age of eight or ten."

“Individual kids have different thresholds of activity and may also handle stress in different ways. Some kids might be so involved in their activities that they don't realize they're trying to do too much. As a parent, it is up to you to help determine when your kids are in over their heads. You should then set a reasonable schedule for your kids, one that everyone can live with most of the time.”

<http://encarta.msn.com/encnet/Departments/Elementary/?article=activities>

“Often a child appears to be very grown up and able to handle responsibility--he or she may even seem like a "miniature adult." However, parents may inadvertently treat their children as adults too early and hurry them along in the process of growing up. Parents need to watch for the possibility that their child has been given too much responsibility and is being pushed too hard. “

Signs of Overcommitment

Stress is a part of life and growing up, but adults need to keep a watchful eye on children and intervene when they sense something is undermining a child's physical or psychological well-being. Here are some signs that stress may be having a negative impact on a child:

- The child develops physical symptoms, such as headaches and stomach pains.
- The child seems restless, tired, and agitated.
- The child appears depressed and will not communicate how he or she feels.
- The child seems less interested in an activity that was once very important to him or her, such as baseball or dance class.
- The child's grades begin to fall, and he or she has less interest than usual in attending classes and doing homework.
- The child exhibits antisocial behavior, such as lying and stealing, forgets or refuses to do chores, and seems more dependent on the parent than in the past.

<http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/5000/5152.html>

“Stress is a response to any situation or factor that creates a negative emotional or physical change or both. People of all ages can experience stress. In small quantities, stress is good -- it can motivate you and help you be more productive. However, excessive stress can interfere with life, activities, and health. Stress can affect the way people think, act, and feel.

Children learn how to respond to stress by what they have seen and experienced in the past. Most stresses experienced by children may seem insignificant to adults, but because children have few previous experiences from which to learn, even situations that require small changes can have enormous impacts on a child's feelings of safety and security. “

<http://apps.uwhealth.org/health/adam/hie/1/002059.htm>

In school, many children are returning to sports, clubs or other extracurricular activities. The trend for parents to get and keep their children involved in enriching activities seems to be growing and that's great. Activities can give a child added self-confidence, discipline, social skills, and values along with whatever skill(s) he or she is learning. But some experts warn that some parents can overdo it and get their children involved in too many activities. Children can suffer from burnout if they don't have time to eat and rest properly, keep up with their studies, or have enough time to “just be a kid”.

http://riri.essortment.com/extracurricular_rdnv.htm

Diagnosing Stress: Identifying and Aiding the Pressured Child

“Children and youth can struggle when they are given too much responsibility too early. This author discusses how concerned adults can recognize stress in children, help children cope, and change their own

behaviors as caretakers to help stressed-out children.”

<http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-0607-longo.html>

Activity overload: When is it time to back off?

“Experts agree that extracurricular activities can be beneficial to children, and today there are so many exciting choices. It keeps them challenged and in a safe environment, and can be very rewarding socially. But how much is too much?”

<http://www.nashuatelegraph.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20070901/PARENTING05/70831025>

Is Your Child Too Busy?

Even those parents who try to help their children cut back on some activities can run up against coaches who won't tolerate absences and kids who want to keep up with their friends. However, it's important for parents to step back and make sure that their children aren't experiencing activity overload.

http://www.revolutionhealth.com/healthy-living/parenting/parenting-tips/children-stress/busy-child?id=kh-54806§ion=section_03

Stress in Children: What Are the Symptoms?

<http://health.yahoo.com/parenting-child/stress-in-children-what-are-the-symptoms/mayoclinic--9A43B495-75CA-4359-B9994A61530700EB.html>

Kidstress

“If you care for children for a living, you have chosen one of the most stressful careers. It is, therefore, important for you to understand where stress comes from, how to minimize it for yourself and the children in your care, and how to manage the stresses that will inevitably arise. I hope this article teaches you some new stress management techniques, both for yourself and the children. I also hope that it validates the many techniques you are already using.”

http://www.cfc-efc.ca/docs/cccf/00014_en.htm