



INSIGHTS

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- Improve your summer health with these easy steps

Smoking Bans

In the United States, a number of healthcare organizations have implemented no-smoking policies as part of their recruiting strategies. Will Canada be far behind?

Smoking bans on all company property both indoors and outdoors should be a visible part of a comprehensive non-smoking policy in Canadian workplaces. Currently, 20% of Canadian organizations ban smoking from their property altogether.

Ontario implemented new regulations that took effect on New Year's Day prohibiting smoking on restaurant and bar patios. This change also added playgrounds and sports fields to the places where people can no longer smoke. The revised legislation also bans the sale of tobacco products from university and college campuses.

I say it's about time. The move is a courageous one. It will curb smoking among young people, and as the Canadian Cancer Society says, "Creating smoke-free outdoor spaces and patios not only protects the public and workers from second-hand smoke but it also reduces social exposure to smoking behaviour."

I'm tired of picking up cigarette butts from the road outside my home, and at this time of year I'm picking up a winter's worth. There is a plethora of butts around the entrance to buildings, in the park where I walk, and most other places where individuals congregate. If they can flick it, a smoker can reach for a nearby garbage can or ashtray.

In the past, the proliferation of butts has caused local municipalities to crack down, banning smoking from the front of its recreational facilities in order to keep people looking for the health advantages inside from having to walk through the haze. In Waterloo, Ontario, the city banned smoking on playing fields with artificial turf because they found that discarded butts were damaging the expensive surface and ultimately cutting down on the years of utility those playing areas would have.

No one needs to be told about the negative health impacts of smoking and the strain it puts on smokers' health and the health of our society in general. Tobacco claims approximately 13,000 lives each year and costs the Ontario health care system an estimated \$2.2 billion in direct costs and another \$5.3 in indirect costs.



Implementing workplace smoking bans and enforcing these restrictions, in conjunction with a well thought out smoking cessation program, will help reduce the likelihood of smoking and shift the organization culture. The Conference Board of Canada cites that smokers cost their employers an additional \$3,396 annually in lost productivity, increased absenteeism, increased insurance costs and other related expenses.

In 2013 Momentous Corp., an Ottawa-based tech company attracted a great deal of attention, both positive and negative, by publicly declaring its strict policy of not hiring smokers. Not only are Momentous employees not allowed to smoke on company time or property, they are expected to carry this forward to their personal time as well. Momentous claims that by taking this stand they have slashed the cost of its health benefits and also increased productivity.

Policies of not hiring smokers are gaining ground in North America. In the United States, a number of healthcare organizations – including hospitals, municipal governments and large private sector employers have implemented no-smoking policies as part of their recruiting strategies. Will Canada be far behind? With health care costs continually rising one has to wonder if the practice of hiring non-smokers will gain traction in the coming years?

One can argue that it's fundamentally unethical for businesses, even ones in the business of healthcare, to refuse to hire candidates just because they smoke, but at some point a "line in the sand" sends an important message about the dangers of smoking and that short-

...continued on reverse

8 Summer Steps for Healthy Living

Improve your health with steps so simple you'll barely notice the effort.

In the warmer, longer, lazier days of summer, the living may not be easy, but your life probably feels less chaotic. Even adults tend to adopt a "school's out!" attitude in summer. That's why this is a perfect time to improve your health in a fashion so seasonally laid back you'll barely notice the effort. Eight health experts in fields such as diet, fitness, stress, vision, and oral health were asked this: If you could only suggest one simple change this season to boost personal health, what would it be? Here are their top tips.



1. Give Your Diet a Berry Boost

If you do one thing this summer to improve your diet, have a cup of mixed fresh berries - blackberries, blueberries, or strawberries - every day. They'll help you load up on antioxidants, which may help prevent damage to tissues and reduce the risks of age-related illnesses. Blueberries and blackberries are especially antioxidant-rich.

A big bonus: berries are also tops in fiber, which helps keep cholesterol low and may even help prevent some cancers.

2. Get Dirty - and Stress Less

To improve your stress level, plant a small garden, cultivate a flower box, or if space is really limited, plant a few flower pots - indoors or out.

Just putting your hands in soil is "grounding." And when life feels like you're moving so fast your feet are barely touching the stuff, being mentally grounded can help relieve physical and mental stress.

3. Floss Daily

You know you need to, now it's time to start: floss every single day. Do it at the beach (in a secluded spot), while reading on your patio, or when watching TV - and the task will breeze by.

Flossing reduces oral bacteria, which improves overall body health, and if oral bacteria is low, your body has more resources to fight bacteria elsewhere. Floss daily and you're doing better than at least 85% of people.

4. Get Outside to Exercise

Pick one outdoor activity - going on a hike, taking a nature walk, playing games such as tag with your kids, cycling, roller blading, or swimming - to shed that cooped-up feeling of gym workouts.

And remember, the family that plays together not only gets fit together - it's also a great way to create bonding time.

5. Be Good to Your Eyes

To protect your vision at work and at play, wear protective eyewear. When outdoors, wear sunglasses that block at least 99% of ultraviolet A and B rays. Sunglasses can help prevent cataracts, as well as wrinkles around the eyes.

And when playing sports or doing tasks such as mowing the lawn, wear protective eyewear. Ask your eye doctor about the best type; some are sport-specific.

6. Vacation Time!

Improve your heart health: take advantage of summer's slower schedule by using your vacation time to unwind.

Vacations have multiple benefits: they can help lower your blood pressure, heart rate, and stress hormones such as cortisol, which contributes to a widening waist and an increased risk of heart disease.

7. Alcohol: Go Lite

Summer's a great time to skip drinks with hard alcohol and choose a light, chilled alcoholic beverage (unless you are pregnant or should not drink for health or other reasons).

A sangria (table wine diluted with juice), a cold beer, or a wine spritzer are all refreshing but light. In moderation - defined as one to two drinks daily - alcohol can protect against heart disease.

8. Sleep Well

Resist the urge to stay up later during long summer days. Instead pay attention to good sleep hygiene by keeping the same bedtime and wake-up schedule and not drinking alcohol within three hours of bedtime.

It's also a good idea to avoid naps during the day unless you take them every day at the same time, for the same amount of time.

There they are: Eight super simple ways to boost your health this summer. Try one or try them all. They're so easy you won't even know they're - shhhh - good for you.

Source: WebMDcom - Summer archives

Smoking Bans ... continued from reverse

pain is necessary for long-term gains for society as a whole.

All that I ask is, if you have to smoke do it somewhere else where it's not incongruous with the physical activity and healthy lifestyle choices that are being promoted, and for goodness sake, stop throwing your butts around for someone else to clean up.

Smokers might balk at the restrictions and think there is nowhere for them to light up in peace. They're right, and perhaps they will finally get the message.

Until next time...

Source(s): Benefits Canada and Waterloo Regional Record