

The HTN Hub

Healthy Together Now (HTN)
Prairie Mountain Health— Formerly Assiniboine RHA

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Health Promotion Coordinators:

Sherrill-Lee Hyra

Base: Rivers
204-328-7541
shyra@arha.ca

Melody Stewart

Base: Rivers
204-328-6215
mstewart@arha.ca

Christa Veitch

Base: Rivers
204-328-7101
cveitch@arha.ca

Angela Hewett

Base: Killarney
204-523-3224
ahewett@arha.ca

Roslyn Cullen

Base: Killarney
204-523-3246
rcullen@arha.ca

Tara Smith

Base: Hamiota
204-764-4273 ext. 268
tsmith@arha.ca

Community Spotlight: Walking for Wellness in Shoal Lake

Shoal Lake has had a grassroots walking group in the community for years. A few years ago, the HTN committee thought they could help this group by offering to open the Communiplex (recreation facility) each weekday from October until the end of April. This would provide the older adults a more comfortable and safe walking environment during the cold winter months.



Now, the HTN committee provides a community member an honorarium to unlock and lock the facility each weekday, offers a healthy snack once per month as well as records steps and promotes the project.

Participants wear pedometers (purchased by HTN) and steps are submitted anonymously to avoid judgments and competition. This encourages each person (even those who use a walker or cane) to do what they feel is healthy for them. Last year, the group walked over 3 million steps! This approach seems to work well and provides a non-threatening environment for participants. The HTN committee records steps and recognizes the group via posters and articles in the local newspaper. This doubles as a promotion tool for the project as well.

Dixie Stewart who volunteers for the project says, “Older adults experience enormous life changes - loss of friends and family, health changes and changes in ability to reach out to others. Many of the participants in the walking group have experienced these changes and continued to attend the group often.” Stewart goes on to say, “They benefit from the exercise, the predictability when other parts of their life are unpredictable, support from experienced and a compassionate support system, motivation to carry on with everyday events when life is hard”.

October is...
International Walk to School Month
AND
Healthy Workplace Month
Also in October...
Oct. 1 - 9: World Breastfeeding Week
Oct. 10: World Mental Health Day
Oct. 16: World Food Day

Wow, time flies! It has been a year since we started creating and you started reading The **HTN Hub**! Your feedback has been positive, however if you have any suggestions or ideas for upcoming issues, please don't hesitate to let us know!



Chew Tobacco in Minor Sports — Can HTN Do Something About It?

You may be surprised to read that smokeless tobacco (commonly known as chew or spit tobacco) use in male minor sports such as hockey and baseball is on the rise. According to the Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey (CTUMS), about 8% of the general population have tried chew but recent studies show a much different story in sports such as hockey, baseball and rugby. The Sport Medicine and Science Council of Manitoba have surveyed many Manitoba athletes in recent years and the statistics show about 50% of 16 – 21 year old male higher performance hockey players are using chew. This statistic is consistent over a 5-year period. Of the chew users surveyed, 80% started in minor hockey with the average age of onset being 15 years old.

HTN community groups are well positioned to bring awareness to this issue. A great first step is to make parents and young athletes aware of the harmful effects of using chew. Some options for HTN groups may be to put up posters in your local recreation facility, bring the topic up to local hockey and baseball clubs to form a partnership, or offer an information card to parents at registration night. If you would like to pursue a tobacco related project, this may be a good opportunity. For resources, ideas or support please contact your Health Promotion Coordinator. More great information related to smokeless tobacco and sport can be found at www.sportmed.mb.ca.

REFERENCES: 1. Canadian Tobacco Use Monitoring Survey 2011: http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hc-ps/tobac-tabac/research-recherche/stat/_ctums-esutc_2011/ann_summary-sommaire-eng.php (accessed July 16, 2013)

2. Executive Summary of the report on Smokeless Tobacco Use By Athletes (2011). Dr. Dean Kriellaars, Sport Medicine & Science Council of Manitoba

The Social Determinants of Mental Health

The previous edition of the HUB featured an article about the social determinants of health, explaining how poor social conditions could negatively affect mental and physical health by acting as prolonged stressors. In this edition, we want to emphasize the social determinants that particularly affect mental health:

- ◇ freedom from discrimination and violence
- ◇ social inclusion
- ◇ access to economic resources

Communities and populations have varied experiences with the social determinants of health. According to the Canadian Mental Health Association, differences can add up and form health inequities, resulting in entire communities with poorer health than the rest of the population

How does this happen? Culture, political situation, and socio-economic factors combine to influence governance, policy and programs: social, health, education, economic activity, cultural and social norms and values, and distribution of socioeconomic

conditions. These issues can then produce strain on people due to low income, social isolation, insecure housing, unemployment, insecure employment, unsafe communities, and gendered violence. People with long-term experience of these types of worries undergo constant stress on their minds and bodies. According to an article by Fisher & Baum, this can make people more vulnerable to developing poor mental health.



Community groups can act to improve the social determinants of mental health in communities through activities and policies that seek to include everyone, regardless of age, ethnicity, or gender. Social inclusion also helps to combat discrimination and violence. Additionally, supporting policies and programs that promote equitable access to resources lessens the burdens on the most vulnerable, reducing the likelihood of further difficulties from mental health problems.

REFERENCES: Canadian Mental Health Association Website; Fisher and Baum, 2010.