Creating a Healthy Workplace Environment

Workbook & Toolkit

ActNowBC
Contents

1 Workbook

Background

The Worksite: A Setting that Influences Health Behaviour
What is a Comprehensive Healthy Workplace Approach?
A Healthy Workplace
Ministry of Health Healthy Workplace Initiative

How to Get Started

Comprehensive Approach to Health Practices Category
Component 1: Awareness and Education
Component 2: Behaviour Change and Skill Building Interventions
Component 3: Health-Promoting Environment
Component 4: Capacity Building
On-Line Resources

2-5 Toolkit

2 Events, Activities and Challenges

10000 Steps Challenge
Bike To Work Week Campaign
Stairway to Health Point of Choice Posters
Stairway to Health Stair Climbing Challenge
5-10 A Day Fruit and Vegetable Challenge
Hearts at Work Health Fair
Physical Activity Team Challenge

3 Policy Development Templates and Tools

Healthy Workplace Policy Statement Template
Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Guidelines for Meetings, Events and Conferences

4 Monitoring & Evaluation

Event/Activity Evaluation Form
Active Workplace Inventory
Heart Check Questionnaire
Healthy Workplace Advisory Focus Group Interview
Workplace Health Behaviour Survey

5 A Healthy Workplace Logic Model
When the Ministry of Health’s Population Health and Wellness Division relocated to 1515 Blanshard Street, the staff took a lead role in redesigning their workspace to ensure it reflected the needs and wishes of the staff in creating a healthy work environment. This involved focusing on a number of aspects of physical design such as lighting, color and art. Staff was also instrumental in collaborating with the Ministry of Health Rebuilding Initiative to introduce a Healthy Workplace Initiative for the Ministry.

Upon endorsement from Ministry of Health Executive, the Population Health and Wellness Division collaborated with the Rebuilding Manager in the Human Resources Strategic Planning Branch to initiate a Healthy Workplace Initiative for the Ministry. The Ministry of Health participated in a one-year pilot project to evaluate the effectiveness of a variety of interventions and strategies thereby adding to the evidence-base and improving the potential for sustained health promotion efforts.

The Healthy Workplace Initiative provided information, opportunities, and support to employees with the goal of increasing physical activity and healthy eating, decreasing tobacco use and managing stress in the employee population. A key focus of the initiative was an evaluation of the impact of evidence based stairway interventions to increase stair use. The one-year pilot demonstrated that a shift from elevator use to stair use occurred as a result of stairwell beautification, team stair climbing challenges, temporary point of decision prompts and permanent directional signage.

Based on the results of these initiatives, the Ministry of Health wants to share their knowledge of best practice and is recommending collaboration within government to create healthier workplace environments across the government.
The Worksite:  
A Setting that Influences Health Behaviour

Two thirds of the population (67.2%) is in the workforce, and on average the Canadian workforce spends more than half of their waking day (10.5 hours), during a typical week, working and commuting to and from their place of work. The competing demands of work, family and/or personal responsibilities often mean less time or energy to be engaged in preventive behaviours like physical activity. These pressures not only make it difficult for a person to be active but often increases stress levels that can also lead to other physical and emotional health issues such as unhealthy eating, tobacco use and substance misuse.

Seventy percent of an organization’s benefit costs fall into six disease categories: cardiovascular, musculoskeletal, respiratory, digestive, cancer and stress. These categories represent the most prevalent types of illness and injury experienced in the North American workplace. In B.C., indirect productivity costs due to premature death and disability attributable to physical inactivity and obesity costs are conservatively estimated at $362 million and $450 million respectively each year. Because of the amount of time that workers spend at work, the workplace is well-positioned to influence a large segment of the population. Larger employers often have the infrastructure to provide the facilities, the human resources and support networks needed to encourage participation. This setting provides an optimum opportunity to encourage and promote healthy lifestyles and self-care to a large segment of British Columbia’s adult population.

Along with tobacco use, poor dietary habits and physical inactivity are drawing worldwide attention for their contribution to the growing epidemic of chronic diseases and obesity. Fifteen percent of British Columbians use tobacco and 39% are physically inactive. In the last decade, the prevalence of overweight and obesity among adult British Columbians has increased from 44% to 55%.

The results of the BC Nutrition Survey show eating habits of adult British Columbians fall substantially short of standards of good nutrition and pose significant risk for cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and other chronic diseases. With baby boomers aging and childhood obesity on the rise, the human and financial burden of obesity and chronic disease is expected to increase, making reduction of these chronic conditions and their risk factors one of the most important public health issues of the 21st Century.
ActNow BC is a cross government, cross-sectoral and integrated initiative with the overarching goal to make British Columbia the healthiest jurisdiction ever to host the Olympic and Paralympic Games by targeting common risk factors for chronic diseases. ActNow BC promotes healthy lifestyles and helps prevent disease by providing people with the information and resources they need to make healthy lifestyle decisions.

Specifically, ActNow BC will promote physical activity, healthy eating, living tobacco free, and making healthy choices during pregnancy.

As stewards, the main role of the Ministry of Health is to provide effective direction, meaningful support, target monitoring, rigorous evaluation and where appropriate, strategic intervention. Through this role, the Ministry of Health is in an ideal situation to provide leadership for healthy workplace initiatives across the provincial government. The Ministry can demonstrate its commitment to health promotion, ensure a healthy work environment and act as a model for comprehensive healthy workplace initiatives as the province leads the way in North America in healthy living and physical fitness.

1 Statistics Canada http://www40.statcan.ca/l01/cst01/labor05.htm
7 Statistics Canada, Canadian Community Health Survey, Cycle 2.1, 2003
8 BC Heart Health Survey (1989)
What is a Comprehensive Healthy Workplace Approach?

A comprehensive healthy workplace initiative consists of elements from the following categories:

1. Health Practices
   - Enables and supports healthy lifestyles, behaviours and coping skills
   - The health practices employers provide to employees in the areas of tobacco use, substance misuse, nutrition, physical activity and stress management.

2. Environment
   - Addresses the health and safety of the workforce
   - Exceeds the responsibilities in relation to current health and safety legislation and directives (e.g. Occupational Safety and Health).

3. Personal Resources
   - The culture of an organization as experienced by employees (e.g. organization human relationships and communication).

A Healthy Workplace
Each category involves a variety of strategies in the following areas:

- Awareness and education
- Behaviour change and skill building
- Health promoting environment
- Capacity building

For example, using the Health Practices category:

- Awareness and Education – an organizational newsletter to raise awareness and to provide information about the benefits of cessation and how to quit smoking.
- Behaviour Change and Skill Building – assists and supports employees to set and achieve small, realistic healthy eating goals.
- Health Promoting Environment – provide access to fitness facilities, change rooms and showers.
- Capacity Building – mobilize community partnerships to support employees in their healthy choices.

In planning a healthy workplace initiative, the following components have a proven impact for success:

- Senior management involvement to demonstrate serious commitment for creating a healthy workplace.
- Participatory planning with all levels of staff in the workplace.
- Primary focus on employees needs.
- Optimal use of on-site resources (staff/experts and facilities).
- Integration of policies with the mission, vision, values and goals of the organization.
- Recognition of multiple interactions among lifestyle choices, social conditions and work environment.
- Tailoring to the unique needs of the workplace.
- Evaluation of process measures and outcomes.
- Long-term commitment.
The Vision: “a healthy, satisfied and productive workforce”

The Goal: to enhance the health and well-being of employees of the Ministry of Health by providing credible information, resources that enable them to take charge of their own health, and a work environment that makes the healthy choices the easy choices.

Principles:

Evidence-based The components of the strategy are based upon evidence of what has worked in other jurisdictions and include an evaluation component to allow the organization to critically reflect on process, impact and cost-effectiveness.

Sustainable Components of the strategy are selected both on the evidence of effectiveness and the potential for sustained impact over the long term. Activities that are integrated with existing strategies, opportunities and existing infrastructure, such as ActNow BC, are prioritized. A key focus is environmental and policy changes where the cost is low and their impact and sustainability high.

Participatory Involving all staff and stakeholders in development, implementation and evaluation enhances the likelihood of adoption and implementation and effectiveness.
How to Get Started

There are many resources available to assist planning, implementing and evaluating a Healthy Workplace Initiative. The following is a proposed checklist:

**Comprehensive Planning framework:**

1. **Obtain management support**
   a. Business case

2. **Establish healthy workplace committee (key decision makers)**
   a. Strategic recruitment
   b. Terms of reference
   c. Leadership

3. **Conduct situational assessment**
   a. Environmental scan (baseline information on what's available, employee absenteeism etc.)
   b. Needs and risk assessment
   c. Organizational change survey

4. **Develop healthy workplace plan**
   a. Vision, mission, values, goals, strategies
   b. Key audiences
   c. Sustainability

5. **Develop program and evaluation plan**
   a. Objectives
   b. Programs/activities
      (4 components: awareness and education; behaviour change and skill building; health promoting environment; and capacity building)
       c. Indicators
       d. Evaluation
       e. Methodology
       f. Resources
       g. Timeline
       h. Responsibility

6. **Obtain management support**
   a. Plans
   b. Presentation
   c. Evidence

7. **Implement plan**
   a. Communication and marketing
   b. Capacity building
   c. Events
   d. Interpersonal activities
   e. Monitoring
   f. Conduct evaluation (process, outcome, impact, economic)

8. **Generate Evaluation Report**
   a. Key result areas
   b. Indicators
   c. Results
   d. Implications
   e. Recommendations

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9 Adapted from *An Introduction to Comprehensive Workplace Health Promotion*, Centre for Health Promotion, University of Toronto. http://www.thcu.ca/workplace/documents/intro_to_workplace_health_promotion_v1.1.FINAL.pdf
A more detailed explanation of each step in the proposed checklist follows:

1. **Obtain management support**
   a. When looking at culture change it is important for the health promotion and human resource professionals to collaborate and to understand the level of commitment of management to a healthy workplace.
   b. There must also be support from owners/employers at all levels, unions/employee groups and other key stakeholders. Information on how to build a business case can be found at *The Business Case for Active Living at Work, Public Health Agency of Canada.*

2. **Establish healthy workplace committee of key decision makers**
   a. This group would be responsible for planning and steering healthy workplace activities.
   b. The committee should include key decision makers, representatives from interest groups, and experts.

3. **Conduct situational assessment**
   a. It’s important to understand the existing culture of the organization and to uncover underlying issues affecting job satisfaction and emotional and mental health contentment at work.
   b. It is also important to know the employees’ needs and preferences and those aspects management is most prepared to support. Some tools to consider are those offered by the Public Service Agency, organizational surveys, focus groups, and suggestion boxes.

4. **Develop a healthy workplace plan**
   a. Consider the information collected from the situational assessment. The plan should address issues related to the health practices, the physical environment, the social environment and personal resources.
   b. Each component should have clear goals and objectives, partners, resources required, expected timelines and indicators of success.

5. **Develop implementation and evaluation plan**
   a. This should be a detailed work plan including program objectives, activities and evaluation methods.
   b. The plan needs to be revisited regularly to monitor progress and to make any necessary modifications.

6. **Obtain management support**
   a. It’s essential that senior management approve the work plan for ongoing support, funding and resources.

7. **Implement the plan**
   a. Key components include communicating and promoting the programs and initiatives with employees as well as receiving and responding to feedback.
8. Generate evaluation report
   a. This will assist in providing accountability, lessons learned and the ability to share successes and course correcting as necessary.
   b. The programs and initiatives need to be evaluated against the goals and objectives set during the planning process.

Comprehensive Approach to Health Practices Category

The focus of the workbook is to provide best practice and evidence-based resources, tools, links and ideas to plan and support healthier choices in the workplace. This serves as a reminder that a comprehensive approach includes activities in each of the following areas:

- Awareness and Education
- Behaviour Change and Skill Building
- Health Promoting Environment
- Capacity Building

The details following are suggestions for implementation. Many of the resource links, tools and templates for the suggested activities are located in the accompanying tool kit.
# Workplace Program Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element 1</th>
<th>Element 2</th>
<th>Element 3</th>
<th>Element 4</th>
<th>Element 5</th>
<th>Element 6</th>
<th>Element 7</th>
<th>Element 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Components</td>
<td>Business Case</td>
<td>Strategic Recruitment</td>
<td>Environmental Scan</td>
<td>Needs &amp; Risk Assessment</td>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Vision Mission</td>
<td>Objectives Program/Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation Time Money/Resources Data gathering Decision Making</td>
<td></td>
<td>Terms of Reference</td>
<td>Values Goals Strategies</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Policies Indicators</td>
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<td>Change Survey</td>
<td>Key Audiences Sustainability</td>
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<td>Supportive environments Policies</td>
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**Implement Evaluation**

Figure: Adapted from: http://www.thcu.ca/workplace/documents/intro_to_workplace_health_promotion_v1.1.FINAL.pdf
Component 1: Awareness and Education

This component increases employees’ awareness of both the benefits of physical activity, healthy eating, stress management and tobacco cessation and to point them to the information and resources to help them take the first steps to enhancing their own wellness. Examples include:

- Distribution of healthy living print materials. This can be accomplished by creating resource areas in lunchrooms or other common areas. Materials would include Canada’s Guide to Healthy Eating and Physical Activity, self-assessment tools on lifestyle issues, healthy living fact sheets, and smoking cessation brochures.
- Healthy living posters in the workplace.
- Motivational messages on white and bulletin boards.
- Newsletters – both internal and from other organizations.
- Special messages on key theme dates such as Move for Health Day, Nutrition month (March) and National Non-smoking Week (January).
- Healthy workplace website or web pages to connect employees to links for interactive interventions regarding healthy lifestyles, community events, resources and contacts.
- Daily health email messages.
- Health Cart - a special mobile resource section set up in the library for employees to access self-help tools, resources on healthy behaviours and pedometers for loan.
- Lunch hour lectures on health related topics.
Component 2: 
Behaviour Change and Skill Building Interventions

This component provides opportunities for employees to develop new healthy living skills and supports the maintenance of healthy practices by providing access to best practice interventions and resources such as books and pedometers. Activities and ideas may include:

- Special events, challenges and activities such as 10,000 Steps Challenge, Bike to Work Week, Stairwell Climbing Challenges, 5-10 A Day Fruit and Vegetable Challenge, Hearts@Work health fair, Quitnow.ca, Corporate Games, and Canada’s Healthy Workplace Week.

- Selling or lending pedometers to employees (pedometers on loan in central area such as library).

- Books to assist goal setting and behaviour change related to health practices.

- Walking clubs.

- Healthy living breaks/stretches during meetings.

Some successful health practice interventions and activities follow.

10,000 Steps Challenge (Pedometer Monitoring)

Goal: To increase employees’ awareness of their baseline activity level and to encourage an increase in the amount of walking they do during the day.

Description: Employees are provided with a pedometer on loan/or for purchase. During orientation, employees are provided with verbal and written instruction on how to use the pedometer, logging information and weekly goal setting. They are also given progression programs to assist them in increasing walking distance safely and appropriately.

Bike to Work Week Campaign

Goal: To increase the number of employees who use active transportation to and from the workplace. The goal of the Bike to Work Week Society is to increase the number of new cyclists during this campaign week.

Description: Employees are provided with support to cycle to and from the workplace. Support includes safe cycling workshops, safe cycling route information and tools to record their distance over the campaign week.
Stairway to Health: Health Canada Stairwell Interventions Initiative

**Goal:** To increase the number of employees taking the stairs instead of the elevator to improve their overall physical health.

**Description:**
- Paint and artwork: To introduce employees to the physical changes in the stairway, an art judging contest could be used to encourage employees to enter the stairway to vote on their favorite painting/artwork.
- Point of decision prompts: Posters that prompt employees to use the stairs are posted (varying the poster every 2-3 weeks) at the point of decision.
- Music in the stairs
- Stair-climbing challenges (individual and team event challenges): Employees can be given the goal of climbing selected structures, e.g., CN Tower, Eiffel Tower, Mount Everest. Employees record every flight of stairs they climb in the building. The accumulated points are marked on a picture or drawing of the structure. Participants are given an activity diary to record their efforts.
- Personal monitoring of stair use: Employees can register on the Stairway to Health website where they can log their daily stair use and calculate their caloric expenditure.
- One-day incentive program: Provide incentives to facilitate employees to make the shift to stair use for one day. An example may involve an event on the May 10th Move for Health Day.

**Tobacco Cessation Programs**

**Goal:** To reduce the number of employees who use tobacco.

**Description:** Quitnow provides free-to-British Columbians support services and quitnow by phone at 1-877-455-2233. Both services are available 24/7 and translation services are also available in 130 languages.

**Eat Well, Live Well: Dietitians of Canada Resources**

**Goal:** To increase the number of employees who eat 5-10 fruits and vegetables a day, 5-10 servings of whole grains and meet the recommended guideline for fat intake.

**Description:** Dietitians of Canada have a set of e-health resources that support individuals in assessing their eating and creating a plan to improve it. One example of support in the workplace is the 5-10 A Day Fruit and Vegetable Challenge.
Hearts@Work Health Fair and Stanford Heart Network Cardiovascular Risk Assessment

**Goal:** To increase awareness of employees’ level of risk for cardiovascular disease.

**Description:** Through the Healthy Heart Society of BC, employees can access the online heart health assessment tool offered by the Stanford Heart Network. Employees get a login ID and can go in and complete the assessment tool and receive individualized feedback. They can also sign up for daily motivational messages.

For organizational employees, the Cardiovascular Risk Assessment can be implemented in combination with a Hearts@Work health fair where employees can also have their cholesterol, blood pressure and blood sugar measured as well as receive advice from health professionals on risk factors and how to change lifestyles.

Canada’s Healthy Workplace Week

**Goal:** To increase awareness of comprehensive workplace health in Canada and increase the number of healthy workplaces in Canada.

**Description:** The Canada’s Healthy Workplace Week website offers a menu of ideas and activities to adapt to your organization. Healthy practice activities and events may include “brown bag” lunchtime lectures and information sessions offering practical strategies and tools to improve employee wellness as well as challenges and programs to enhance healthy living skills.
Component 3: Health-Promoting Environment

This component creates a supportive environment to make the healthy choices the easy choices for employees. Health-promoting policies may be “cultural” such as the encouragement of flexible work hours to accommodate healthy lifestyles or “physical” structural changes such as the availability of bike racks and change rooms. For example:

- Shower, change rooms and locker facilities.
- Bicycle storage facilities.
- Flexible work hours such as extended lunch hours to accommodate healthy behaviours in the workplace.
- Employee access to public facilities at reduced rates/discounts.
- Appropriate time to implement and sustain activities.
- Indoor and outdoor walking “trails” and routes.
- Participation in walking meetings and clubs.
Food Policy

Goal: To increase the number of employees who eat healthy by increasing the selection and availability of nutrient dense foods available in the workplace.

Description:

a. Vending Machines: work with the supplier to increase healthy choices, product labeling and differential price points for healthy food choices.

b. Cafeterias: work with the supplier to increase healthy choices and point of choice labeling to enhance employee awareness of the healthy choices.

Stairway Policy

Goal: To increase the number of employees who are active in the workplace by increasing stair use and decreasing the barriers to stair use.

Description: The use of point-of-decision prompts at all levels and creating a supportive and aesthetically pleasing environment through:

- Paint and art work in the stairwells
- Carpet and rubber treading to increase safety and make it more inviting
- Music

Smoke-free Workplaces, Vehicles and Grounds Policy

Goal: To protect employee health by reducing the number of employees exposed to second-hand smoke.

Description: Ensuring the organization grounds and vehicles are smoke-free in addition to existing restrictions on smoking indoors and in restricted areas surrounding building entrances and air intake vents.
Component 4: Capacity Building

Ongoing monitoring and evaluation will assist in developing evidence based policies and programs that promote, support and enable healthy workplaces. Having an evaluation framework and success indicators in place is essential to the success and sustainability of the program. Performance measures should be based on the goals of the program and assessed at baseline as well as throughout program delivery. These results can identify any adjustments necessary to achieve the goals and ultimately to determine if the program should continue.

The following tools may assist in monitoring and evaluation:

- Active Workplace Inventory (completed by Healthy Workplace Committee).
- Heart Check Questionnaire: Assessing Worksite Support for a Heart Healthy Lifestyle (completed by Healthy Workplace Committee).
- Healthy Workplace Advisory Focus Group Interview.
- Workplace Behaviour Survey (for employees).
- Organization Surveys (for employees).
- Employee Focus Groups.
- Review of statistics on short-term illness, long-term disability, injury, number of lost days and cost of lost days per employee. These measurements need to be monitored over the long term, as ‘point-in-time’ measurements are often influenced by other risk factors not directly related to healthy lifestyles (e.g. flu season, year-end stress levels).
- Targeted evaluation of key activities and strategies such as 10,000 Steps Challenge, including employee satisfaction and intention to change etc.
- Process evaluation of participation rates, website hits, employee focus groups, etc.

Employee Recognition and Incentives

The purpose of employee recognition, rewards and incentives is to enhance motivation for participation, which is normally 20-30% of the employee population. As employees participate in healthy workplace activities they are eligible for recognition and incentives. This can be done through:

- Participant certificates
- Prizes for participation and achievements
- Recognition of participation through electronic and printed distribution (e.g. email announcements and newsletters)
- Random “door prizes.”
**Information in the Tool Kit**

Templates and Tools to choose from:

- 10,000 Steps Challenge
- Bike to Work Week Campaign
- Stairway to Health Point of Choice Posters
- Stairway to Health Stair Climbing Challenge
- 5-10 A Day Fruit and Vegetable Challenge
- Hearts@Work Health Fair
- Physical Activity Team Challenge
- Healthy Workplace Policy Statement

Template

- Draft Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Guidelines for Meetings, Events and Conferences
- Event/Activity Evaluation Form
- Active Workplace Inventory
- Heart Check Questionnaire: Assessing Worksite Support for a Heart Healthy Lifestyle
- Healthy Workplace Advisory Focus Group Interview
- Workplace Health Behaviour Survey
- Healthy Workplace Logic Model

**On-Line Resources**

*Healthy Workplaces*

Active Living at Work: How to build a business case
www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/fitness/work/case_template_e.html

Canada’s Healthy Workplace Week
www.healthyworkplaceweek.ca and www.nqi.ca/chww/strat.htm

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety
www.ccohs.ca/products/publications/wellness.html

Health Canada  www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hec-esc/workplace/publications.htm

Health Canada, Workplace Health Strategies Bureau  www.hc-sc.gc.ca/whsb

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada – Worklife Balance in Canadian Workplaces  www.hrsdc.gc.ca

National Quality Institute: Canadian Healthy Workplace Resource (HWR) Guide
www.nqi.ca

National Quality Institute: Healthy Workplace
www.nqi.ca/english/healthyworkplace.htm

University of Toronto Health Communication Unit
www.thcu.ca/Workplace/Workplace.html
**Active Living**

**Go For Green**  www.goforgreen.ca/

**PAR-Q Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire**  www.csep.ca/pdfs/par-q.pdf

**Getting Started: Centres for Disease Control and Prevention**  www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnppa/physical/index.htm

**Customize a Fitness Plan: FitDay.com**  www.fitday.com/

**Canada’s Physical Activity Guide to Healthy Active Living**  www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/pau-uap/paguide/index.html

**Tips from the Heart and Stroke Foundation**  www.heartandstroke.ca/Page.asp?PageID=38&SubCategoryID=130&Src=living&Type=Article

**Canada on the Move: Donate your steps to health research**  www.canadaonthemove.ca/INMD/main.do?task=display

**Rockhampton 10,000 Steps: Step Log**  www.10000steps.org.au/index2.html

**Penticton Steps Out: Steps Log**  www.penticton.ca/step/default.asp

**Walk to Whistler: Log your progress**  www.walktowhistler.com/

**Health Canada and the Canadian Council for Health and Active Living at Work Stairway To Health**  www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/sth-evs/english/

**Bike to Work Week**  www.biketoworkvictoria.ca/

**Greater Victoria Cycling Coalition**  www.gvcc.bc.ca/

**Smoking Cessation**

**quitnet.com**  www.quitnet.org/

**Smoker’s Helpline: BC 1-877-455-223**  www.cancer.ca/ccs/internet/standard/0,3182,3278_451614__langId-en,00.html


**Tips from Heart and Stroke Foundation**  www.heartandstroke.ca/Page.asp?PageID=33&ArticleID=2800&Src=living&From=SubCategory

**HealthFile on Quitting Smoking**  www.bchealthguide.org/healthfiles/hfile91.stm

**Resources**  www.preventionsource.bc.ca/
Healthy Eating

Dietitians of Canada  www.dietitians.ca/
BC HealthFiles about Nutrition  www.bchealthguide.org/healthfiles/index.stm
Canada’s Food Guide to Healthy Eating
www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hpfb-dgpsa/onpp-bppn/food_guide_rainbow_e.html
5 to 10 A Day  www.5to10aday.com/

Tips from Heart and Stroke Foundation
www.heartandstroke.ca/Page.asp?PageID=846&SubcategoryID=175&QuizID=50&Src=living&From=SubCategory

Stress Management

Canadian Mental Health Association
www.cmha.ca/english/info_centre/stresstest.htm
www.cmha.ca/english/coping_with_stress/index.html

Tips from Heart and Stroke Foundation
www.heartandstroke.ca/Page.asp?PageID=38&SubCategoryID=19&Src=living&Type=Article