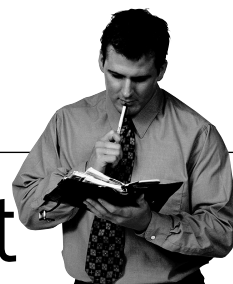


HEALTH CARE



Canadians are #3 on vacation-deprived list

A summer break can reduce stress

Planning a vacation this summer? A recent poll has shown that Canadians are not using all of the vacation time to which they are entitled each year.

The average worker earns 19 days off, yet 24% said they do not take all their vacation time. Another 10% said they will not take any time off at all.

The fact that over a third of working Canadians do not use all the vacation time they have coming to them means that we are among the most vacation-deprived countries in the world.

Only the United States and Australia are higher on the "vacation deprivation" list (Expedia.ca/Ipsos-Reid Vacation Deprivation Survey 2006).

Not taking all your allotted vacation time can have consequences for your mental and physical well being. We all need time away from the stresses of the workplace to recharge. While everyone has stress on the job, everyone handles it differently. Having too much stress or having trouble coping with it can lead to a variety of health problems. Warning signs that your stress level may be too high could include:

- headaches
- high blood pressure
- sleeping difficulties
- anxiety
- irritability
- feeling depressed

According to the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, too much stress may lead to burnout or could bring on heart conditions over time. Too much stress can also make people less resistant to a wide range of illnesses. While practising healthy eating habits, staying active and making time for family and friends can help you to cope with job stress, it is important to take blocks of time to truly "unwind".

The Ipsos-Reid study also shows that while too much stress can result



in a decline in intellectual function, taking a vacation improves it. So taking a vacation can improve job performance.

Many people intend to use their vacation time but find that they have trouble planning to get away from work. According to sociologist and stress-relief specialist Beverly Beuermann-King, there are a number of strategies that will help to make sure that people take the break they deserve:

- plan your vacation well in advance
- tell everyone that it is a priority and you cannot change plans

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- let people know you will not be available while you are away
- do not work up to the last minute before leaving
- do not take work with you
- leave a message on your phone

and email telling others that you will be in touch when you get back

It is also important to make plans for when you return to work. Use the first day back to catch up on messages and what has happened while you were gone. Try to avoid taking on new projects right away. In other words, ease yourself back into working.

Remember, taking a vacation is good for your mental health as well as your physical well being. Enjoy your time off!

Health Notes is prepared by staff of the Halton Region Health Department.

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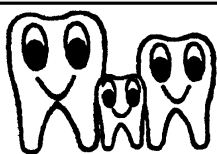
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