

# Health Notes

## So your child won't wear a bike helmet?

Since 1995, the law has required that children and youth under the age of 18 years wear a helmet when riding a bicycle. So why is it that we still see so many children and teens riding without one? Here's what high school students have to say about why they don't wear bicycle helmets:

- Parents should have to wear them too.
- The law should be enforced.
- Kids should start to wear them when they're younger.
- Helmets need to be more comfortable.
- Helmets should look "cool."

But even wearing the proper safety gear isn't enough. We don't allow our children to play in swimming pools if they don't know how to swim, yet we often allow our children to ride their bicycles on the road when they've never really been taught to ride. There's more to it than taking off the training wheels and learning to balance.

Young people and adults alike need to learn how to ride a bicycle properly and safely. Many communities and schools offer programs for children where they learn cycling safety and skills, and how to make sure their bicycle is safe to ride.

In addition to sharing the road with bicycles, sharing the road with rollerbladers and skateboarders is also becoming more common. These activities also require the use of proper helmet, knee and elbow pads and wrist guards. Safety equipment needs to be worn whatever the length of the trip, even if your child is "just going down the street." Did you know that?

As a parent, you can help your child be safer when bicycling, rollerblading or skateboarding. Teach your child the rules of the road, and that cars may not always see them. Let your child know that he or she is expected to wear their safety gear whenever they bike, blade or board. Enroll your child in a program that teaches them how to bike, blade or board safely and to keep their equipment in good shape. Purchase the safety gear before you buy the bicycle, rollerblades or skateboard. But most importantly, show your child how to wear proper safety gear by wearing it yourself!

For more information on safety gear for bicycling, rollerblading and skateboarding, contact the Halton Regional Health Department at 825-6060, ext. 7442, or TTY 827-9833.

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

## Town program geared to get Miltonians moving

By **ANDREW JENKINS**  
Special to *The Champion*

With the warm summer months looming in the distance, Miltonians are encouraged now more than ever to get up and get active with Participation's SummerActive Campaign 2000.

The Town of Milton in partnership with Halton Region's Choices 4 Health Network expects to see strong participation in the fitness program.

The goal of the campaign is consistent with the Active Ontario goal of increasing the activity level of community residents by 2 per cent.

SummerActive is a community-based educational and promotional event for healthy, active living that was implemented nation-wide in 1996 as the successor to the 15-year Canada's Fitweek promotion.

Although the program was widely promoted, there was little evidence to show that it had any impact on changing lifestyle behavior among inactive Ontarians.

However, Patrick D'Almada, coordinator of aquatics and active living programs at the Milton Leisure Centre, said he believes the program will be successful in educating people on healthier lifestyles.

"It all gets back to the people and their

involvement. Our goal is to increase activity by 2 per cent. I think people are willing to exercise more with the warm weather coming," said Mr. D'Almada.

With some retooling, the campaign blends the same promotional methods of the traditional program with a new strategy intended to encourage a first step toward regular, moderate physical activity.

"We want people to spend 30 minutes doing exercises or activities for four days a week for a two-week period. Then hopefully they will continue on after that," said Mr. D'Almada.

The implementation of the plan will have the event promoted through local fitness clubs, active living centres, seniors' centres, health services, nutrition services and active living-related businesses by providing try it opportunities.

Also log sheets will become available at certain active lifestyle businesses for people to record their activity and to submit for chances at winning prizes.

"Last year, when the program began, there was limited promotion. This year we're contacting more partners with businesses throughout Milton to have log sheets on hand for pick up and drop off," said Mr. D'Almada.

It's projected that 68 per cent of adults are inactive or lead inactive lifestyles.

## Learn to calm down mind

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cal ailment, it can also aid those who just may not be functioning at an optimum level.

And sometimes changing that can be as easy as taking a break from the constant chaos of life.

"I use a lot of different stress manage-

ment techniques," she said. "I'll suggest taking yoga or tai chi classes."

Deep breathing is another tool.

"It takes a while to learn if you're a person who's in their head a lot and there's a lot of chatter," said Ms Ristok.

"It's just learning to be still and quiet and how to calm their mind down."

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