



# HEALTHQUEST

Summer 2003

Workplace Wellness Matters ... from your EAP

## HAPPY TRAILS: PLANNING A FAMILY-FRIENDLY VACATION

The days are growing longer, scarves are being swapped for sunglasses and school is almost out. All signs are pointing towards summer. For adults, the hottest season is a time to kick back, relax and erase distant memories of wind chill factors and frozen toes. For kids, it means a break from homework and indoor play. For both, it marks the start of the family vacation season.

Though taking a break from daily routines and exploring new places can be a re-energizing experience, the stress of organizing time off can leave you feeling like you need a vacation from your vacation. Below are some tips that can help you plan a memorable family holiday for everyone.

### MAPPING IT OUT

**Choose wisely.** Be sure that your vacation time offers a little something for everyone. Though your idea of a great holiday might be a gripping book and a comfortable hammock, your children might be bored senseless after the first day. Ask family members what activities they'd like to do so that you can create a holiday that has something for everyone. Variety is not only the spice of life: it's also a key ingredient in a great family vacation.

**Plan in advance.** While spur-of-the-moment activities can be exciting, you'll be more likely to do the activity and avoid disappointment by creating a plan and sticking to it.

**Let kids choose.** From restaurant picks to selecting a ride at the amusement park, children savour the chance to have their say. Allow kids to create a short list of activities and the chance to realize at least one. If your children are too young to create their own 'to do' list, offer up two or three options to choose from so they feel part of the decision-making.

#### *Staying closer to home this summer?*

**Look into local activities.** Most libraries, community centres, local parks, etc. offer kids fun, inexpensive summer activities that fight boredom and encourage children to explore new interests.

**Investigate the world outside your door.** Whether it's swimming at the local pool, a trip to the zoo or a picnic in the park, home-grown vacations let you stop and discover the unique and exciting things in your area you may have overlooked. Arrange mini field trips to local sights and activities and allow your children to invite friends from time to time. It's more fun for the kids and their parents may offer to return the favour.

**Remember to relax!** Staying at home can make it harder to take some time for yourself. It's just as important to schedule inactivity as it is a trip to the museum. Set aside a few hours a day to stop and smell the roses, read the paper or put your feet up.

### THE FINAL COUNTDOWN

**Pack snacks, games, books, activities etc.** There's no better way to keep your children in the holiday spirit than with healthy food and entertainment. Even if meals are included in your travel plans, it's wise to have a few sandwiches up your sleeve (not literally of course) should the food not be to your kids' or your own liking.

**Leave time for mishaps.** Allow extra time for life's little delays such as traffic jams and toddler temper tantrums. Start your holiday off on the right foot and follow the 30-minute rule: estimate the maximum amount of time you anticipate it will take to get to your destination and add 30 minutes.

**Rely on a trusted neighbour** or friend to collect your mail, pick up phone messages, water plants and check on the house if you're planning on being away for more than a few days.

### VACATION DAZE

**Keep it simple.** Don't make the mistake of trying to see and do everything while on a break. Remember: a vacation shouldn't be work. Allow each family member to choose one or two activities and spare some space for spontaneity.

**Capture memories.** Take pictures of the action, write down impressions of places visited in a journal or create a scrapbook that everyone can contribute to, for future journeys down memory lane.

**Aim for nothing less than imperfection.** Realize that problems you and your family had before the holiday, are not going to evaporate over the course of a few weeks. Accept that parts of your time off will work out better than expected, while others are bound to fizzle. Take a deep breath, take it all in stride and take the time to relax and enjoy yourself.

**Give your family time to recover.** Avoid a shock to your relaxed and rejuvenated system: plan at least a day or two of recovery time so that you and your family can ease back in at work and school.

## STAYING WELL ON VACATION

After months of planning, your vacation is almost here. You've mapped out an itinerary and are ready to hit the road, the shops or the hammock. But you may spend so much time thinking about the 'fun' aspects of your time away from work that you forget to consider less 'exciting' vacation concerns, like keeping healthy. Nothing can sabotage a holiday more quickly than an unexpected illness. The suggestions below will help you avoid common travel bugs and focus on a healthy, happy holiday.

**Pack a first aid kit** equipped with band-aids, gauze, aspirin, Imodium, disinfectant and any other items you may need to treat minor mishaps.

**Drink lots of water.** Though eight glasses a day is a reasonable minimum, you'll need more if you're hiking, biking or even just sightseeing. An active person should drink four to eight ounces (120ml to 240 ml) of water every 10 to 20 minutes depending on the walking speed and the temperature outside. Drink up before you feel thirsty as the body usually doesn't signal thirst until it's already dehydrated. If you're not sure about the water quality drink bottled or boiled water.

**Wear sunscreen even if it's overcast.** It may seem like a harmless, grey day, but the sun's rays can penetrate the clouds and leave you feeling burned. Choose a sunscreen with an SPF 15 minimum and slather it on every few hours - more often if you're in the water, perspiring a lot or are out between 11am and 2pm, when the sun is at its most intense.

**Wear a hat** during the day to avoid heat stroke and guard your face from the sun.

**Protect yourself from insect bites.** Gone are the days when illness from insect bites was only a "tropical" concern. When in areas where bugs are an issue - such as in forests and near water - wear light-

coloured, long-sleeved shirts, long pants, closed shoes and a layer of insect repellent. Avoid being outdoors at dusk and in areas where there is stagnant water. Seek medical support right away if - after receiving a bite - you begin to feel feverish, headachy, weak, sensitive to light or if there is extreme swelling around the bite.

**Keep your hands clean.** Carry moist towels or anti-bacterial gel to avoid exposure to unwanted bacteria and germs while out and about.

**Watch what you eat.** Opt for cooked and peeled vegetables and avoid raw salads if you're in an area where tap water is undrinkable. Steer clear of street vendors and run-down (i.e. dirty) looking restaurants where your chances of being exposed to bacteria are higher.

### *If going abroad:*

**Get medical advice from a physician.** If you require vaccinations, you may need to get them six to eight weeks before the trip, so seek out medical support well in advance.

**Stay informed.** Health Canada and the World Health Organization offer up-to-the minute information, warnings and advisories for potential health hazards nationally and abroad. Visit <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/protection/warnings/2003.htm> or <http://www.who.int/entity/en/>.

**Carry a copy of your prescription** with your medicine (in its original labeled bottle) so you don't run into trouble when crossing borders. Remember to keep medication with you for easy accessibility.

Whether you're staying close to home or venturing overseas, travelling solo or embarking on a family getaway, your holiday is the perfect opportunity for you and your family to relax, reconnect, and recharge.

If you have any questions about this topic, or if you wish to discuss a personal situation you may be experiencing, we invite you to contact your EAP counsellors to arrange a telephone or in-person counselling session. All contact between you and your counsellor is completely confidential.

**English Service: 1-800-387-4765**

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