

## **ADULT WELLNESS SURVEY 1999 - SUMMARY**

### **1. Top 10 Health Concerns**

*In our efforts to improve the health practices of Bermudians it is important to address the health needs and concerns as identified by the community at large in addition to the priority areas identified by health professionals and other experts.*

We included the distribution of the respondents in the following areas of health concern:

(1) AIDS/Sexual diseases-58%, (2) cancer-49%, (3) drugs/alcohol abuse-43%, (4) diabetes-25%, (5) heart disease-22%, (6) obesity & food related diseases-20%, (7) stress-12%, (8) health care cost-7%, (9) smoking-5% and (10) the environment-5%.

### **2. Obesity**

*Obesity is an important risk factor in a number of major health problems – diabetes, hypertension, coronary heart disease, cancer (colon, rectum & prostate in men and gallbladder, breast, uterus and ovaries in women), gout, osteoarthritis and more. Given the health consequences of obesity and the high percentage of Bermudians (1 in every 3 adults) with this health concern, we should include obesity as a major health priority.*

- 1 in every 3 adults in Bermuda is obese
- 1 in every 2 adults is above a healthy body weight
- 1 in every 2 adults is also attempting to lose weight

The percentage of adults with obesity increased as they ate more of following foods or increased the frequency at which they ate between meals: (1) fast foods, (2) fried foods, (3) soda & sweetened drinks, (4) baked goods, (5) refined grains and (6) high fat dairy products.

The percentage of adults with obesity was lowest for those who practised one or more of the following eating habits: (1) consuming low fat dairy products, (2) eating 5 or more servings of fruit & vegetables/day, (3) eating mostly whole grains, (4) eating breakfast everyday, (5) eating 1 to 3 serving of beans/day and (6) being a vegetarian.

### **3. Physical Activity**

*Inactivity is a risk factor associated with premature death, coronary heart disease, colon cancer, diabetes, hypertension, osteoporosis, weight gain, a decreased ability to cope with stress, lack of muscle tone, more colds and other health problems. Given the health consequences of being inactive and the high percentage of Bermudians (1 in 3 adults) who do not engage in any form of physical activity, we*

*should include the promotion of physical activity as an important indicator of health and wellness.*

- 1 in every 3 adults does not engage in any form of physical activity
- 1 in every 4 adults who exercise (walk, run, cycle, dance etc.) do this form of activity 3 or more times a week
- 1 in every 4 adults does vigorous exercise 4 or more times a week
- The highest percentage of obesity was among the physically inactive or those who exercised for 2 or less days a week
- The highest percentage of obesity was among those watched 4 or more hours of TV per night
- The lowest percentage of obesity was among those with an active lifestyle or those who exercised for 4 or more times/week (30+ minutes per session)
- The lowest percentage of obesity was among those who viewed less than 1 hour of TV per night

#### **4. Wellness and Occupational Health**

*The work environment can play a significant role in either promoting or hindering healthy lifestyle choices and behaviours. Well designed wellness programmes have resulted in improved employee health status, reduced cost from workers compensation and insurance, fewer on-the-job accidents, greater employee satisfaction, greater productivity, improved corporate image and decreased absenteeism. In this study, wellness at work was linked to lower stress scores and better weight control. We need to increase the level of worksite wellness programmes from the present level of 16 percent among working adults. More than 80% of employees expressed an interest in a work sponsored wellness programme.*

##### Job Satisfaction

- Nearly 1 in every 4 adults (23%) was dissatisfied with their work life
- Job dissatisfaction was linked to higher stress scores
- Job satisfaction was linked to lower stress scores

##### Precautions Against Job Related Health Hazards

- 1 in every 4 adults (26%) believe their employers do not take enough precautions against work related health hazards
- Working with health hazards was associated with higher stress scores
- A lack of health hazards on the job was linked to lower stress scores

##### Health Hazards at Work

In this survey we identified 17 different occupational health hazards. The top 8 identified health hazards needing attention were: (1) bad air, (2) excessive heat or cold, (3) eye strain, (4) poor work space or not enough, (5) strain from a poorly designed workspace or long periods of standing or sitting, (6) not enough safety training, (7) too much noise, and (8) excessive litter or mess. The numbers of

adults who identified hazards needing attention ranged from 28% for bad air (fumes or poor ventilation) to 12% for health hazards six, seven and eight.

#### Work Sponsored Wellness Programmes

- 16% of respondents indicated a job wellness initiative
- Employees on jobs with a wellness programme had lower stress scores
- Employees on jobs without a wellness programme had higher stress scores

#### Participation in Job Wellness Programmes

- Employees who participated in a wellness program had the lowest stress scores
- Non-participating employees had the highest stress scores

### **5. Readiness to Change Health Habits**

*Motivation can be defined as a state of readiness to change. To effectively motivate others to make lifestyle changes, we must match our interventions with the readiness level of the individuals or population we desire to influence in a positive way. Below we identified health interest where adults can be targeted through health programmes.*

In this section we looked at 19 health interest areas. The top 5 areas where people indicated an intention to change within the next 12 months include: (1) weight loss, (2) improve eating habits, (3) begin an exercise programme, (4) stress management, and (5) join a health club. For each health area 20% or more of the adults responded favourably.

### **6. Eating Habits and Health Implications**

*Dietary excess and imbalance is associated with coronary heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes, atherosclerosis, high blood pressure, obesity, dental diseases, osteoporosis and gastrointestinal diseases. It is now clear that diet contributes in substantial ways to the development of these diseases and that modification of diet can contribute to their prevention and control. Given the finding that 1 in every 4 adults or more could benefit by changing their eating habits, healthy eating should be a health promotion priority.*

One in every four adults (25%) or more could benefit by eating breakfast daily, increasing their consumption of whole grains, fruit, vegetables, beans and water intake. The same numbers of adults could benefit by eating less between meals and decreasing their consumption of high fat dairy foods, high fat meat, baked goods, salty foods, soda and sweetened drinks.

### **7. Stress, Health and Coping Skills**

*Many people describe stress as something that happens to them – the problems or concerns they have to deal with. However, it is how we respond to the stressors of life that determines if we will rise to the occasion or become all unraveled and reap*

*the negative consequences (mental, physical & social) of prolonged stress overload. Given the level (1 in every 4 adults) of stress overload (an indication of poor coping skills) in the adult population and the negative consequences of prolonged stress overload, it is important to include emotional health as a major health promotion priority.*

- One in every four adults (25%) may be experiencing stress overload
- Stress overload was highest in people who used TV and/or alcohol to cope
- Stress overload was lowest in those who used prayer, talking to someone and/or exercise to cope with stress
- The higher the level of educational attainment or income the lower the level of stress overload scores
- Having a good social support system of family or friends, being married and living in a household of five or more individuals was associated with lower stress scores
- The lack of a social support system, being single and living alone was associated with higher stress scores

## **8. Addiction, Dependencies and Health**

*An addiction has been defined as a love trust relationship with a substance, individual or process that gives the illusion that real needs are being met through a mood change. Healing takes place when the illusion is replaced with the real thing – need fulfilment. We should give priority to nurturing the people of Bermuda by meeting their physical, social, mental and spiritual needs from an early age and thus reduce the likelihood that they will be attracted to the illusions that leave them empty and unfulfilled.*

### Alcohol

*Given the intake of alcohol within the drinking population (2/3 drink 3 or more drinks at a time) and the health risk (hemorrhagic stroke, decreased immune function, accidents, several cancers, osteoporosis, gastritis, brain shrinkage, PMS, confused thinking, depression, an increase in risky behaviours, heavy drinking and more) increased with even moderate drinking (1 to 2 drinks a day), strategies for reducing the consumption of alcohol among adults should be promoted.*

### Adults who Drank Alcohol in the Past Month

- 2 out of every 3 (67%) adults drank 1 or more drinks of alcohol in the past month
- 21% drank less than 1 drink in the past month or no longer drink alcohol

### Average Alcohol Intake on Drinking Days

- On drinking days more than 2/3 (77%) of alcohol consumers drank 3 or more drinks at one time

### Alcohol Abuse based on the CAGE Questionnaire

- We suspect that 12% of the population are abusers of alcohol
- 11% of the population are strongly indicated as being abusers of alcohol
- Almost ½ (44%) of the adults who were strongly indicated as being abusers of alcohol had moderate to high stress overload scores
- Only 21% of adults with no indication of alcohol abuse had moderate to high stress overload scores

### Number of Binge Drinking Occasions

- 1 in every 2 (56%) adults who drank alcohol binged (5 or more drinks/occasion is considered heavy drinking) at least once in the past month
- 1 in every 5 (21%) adults who drank alcohol in the past month binged 2 or more times
- As the number of binge drinking occasions increased the percentage of individuals with moderate to high stress overload scores increased

### Mood Altering or Sleep Enhancing Drugs

- 6% of adults reported using these drugs daily
- 11% of adults reported using these drugs several days a week
- 7% of adults reported using these drugs a few times a year
- The regular use of drugs to affect moods, relax or improve sleep habits was associated with high numbers (69%) with stress overload scores
- Only 19% of the non-users had moderate to high stress overload scores

### Smoking

*Given the many health problems associated with smoking (several cancers, emphysema, asthma, chronic bronchitis, heart disease, insomnia, early wrinkles, shortness of breath, back problems, hypertension, diabetes, peptic ulcer and more) and the findings that 17% of adults still smoke and another 28% are exposed to second-hand smoke everyday, smoking cessation should be an important public health priority.*

### Current Smoking Habit

- 17% of adults currently smoke cigarettes
- 38% of adults have quite smoking
- Looking at just the adults who have ever smoked tobacco, 2/3 (69%) have quite the habit, 26% smoke every day and 5% report smoking some times or rarely
- Moderate to high stress overload scores were present in 20% of former smokers and 37% of current smokers

### Cigarettes Smoked on an Average Day

- 40% of smokers smoke 11 to 20 cigarettes
- 39% smoke 6 to 10 cigarettes

- 21% smoke 1 to 5 cigarettes
- Moderate to high stress overload scores were present in 27% of individuals who smoked 1 to 5 cigarettes and 44% of those who smoked 11 to 20 cigarettes a day

#### Attempts to Quit Smoking in the Past 12 Months

- 44% of current smokers have attempted to quite smoking (1 or more times) in the past 12 months

#### Frequency of Exposure to Second-Hand Smoke

- 4 out of 5 adults (82%) are exposed to second-hand smoke at least once a week
- 28% of adults are exposed to second-hand smoke every day

#### Caffeine Containing Drinks

*While caffeine containing drinks are considered safe by most people, it is important to keep in mind that coffee, tea and cola drinks can cause nervousness, irritability, coping problems, PMS symptoms, insomnia, muscle twitching, elevated temperature, irregular heart rhythms and heartburn. In our efforts to promote a healthy community it is important to consider if caffeine-containing drinks are contributing to any of these unpleasant symptoms.*

#### Average Intake of Coffee, Tea and Cola

- 1 in every 2 adults (47%) drinks coffee or tea every day
- 1 in every 4 adults (24%) drinks caffeine-containing soda every day
- Moderate to high stress overload scores were present in 22% of non-drinkers of coffee, tea or cola and 31% of those who drank 3 or more servings of coffee, tea and/or cola a day

## **9. Health Status and Health Perceptions**

*Health status is a quality of life indicator. It influences home life, job performance, social interactions and the ability to live life to the fullest. In this survey, 1 in 3 adults rated their health as fair to poor. At least 30% of adults' report using prescription drugs every day. Given these findings and the fact (for most of us) that what we do with our bodies and what we put into our bodies has more to do with our state of health than our genetic inheritance, it is vital that we bring to the forefront the link between lifestyle practices and both disease outcomes and recovery from illness.*

#### Physician Indicated Health Problems

In this survey we reported on fifteen-health problems. The 6 most frequent health problems were: (1) allergies, (2) asthma, (3) migraine headaches, (4) tension headaches, (5) depression and (6) anemia. The number of adults responding in these six areas ranged from 21% for allergies to 10% for depression and anemia.

#### Rating of Health Status

- 1 in every 3 (1/3) adults rated their health as fair to poor
- 2 in every 3 (2/3) adults rated their health as very good to excellent
- Freedom from stress overload scores was identified in 70% of participants who rated their health as excellent, 64% of participants who rated their health as very good and 53% of participants who rated their health as fair/poor

#### Today's Health Compared to a Year Ago

- 1 in 4 adults (27%) saw themselves better in health today compared to a year ago
- 63% reported no change while 10% reported a worse state of health than a year ago
- About 22% of the adults who viewed themselves about the same had moderate/high stress overload scores while 40% of the participants who saw themselves worse off had this same range of stress scores

#### Physical Health in the Past Month

- More than 2/3 of adults (73%) reported no days of poor physical health
- 7% indicated 5 or more days of poor physical health
- 7% indicated 3 to 4 days of poor health
- Five or more days of poor physical health (i.e. physical health or injury) was associated with the highest number (45%) with stress overload scores

#### Mental Health in the Past Month

- More than 2/3 of adults (71%) reported no days with poor mental health (stress, depression & emotional problems)
- 10% indicated 5 or more days of poor mental health
- 7% indicated 3 to 4 days of poor mental health
- Three or more days of poor mental health was associated with the higher numbers (40.5% to 58.2%) with stress overload scores

#### Days of Physical Limitation in the Past Month

- 80% of adults did not miss a day from work or other activities due to poor physical or mental health
- 5% indicated 5 or more days of physical limitation
- 4.3% indicated 3 to 4 days of physical limitation
- Three or more days of physical limitation (i.e. unable to work or do other physical activity) due to poor physical or mental health was associated with the higher numbers (52.2% to 65.3%) with stress overload scores

#### Prescription Drugs

- At least 30% of adults used prescription medications every day
- 7% of adults used 3 or more different medications a day

- 1 in 4 adults (23%) reported using 1 to 2 different prescription medications a day
- 40% of the adults who took three or more different medications a day had moderate to high stress overload scores while only 22% of the non-users had this same range of stress scores

#### Non-Prescription Drugs

- 21% of adults used non-prescription medications every day
- 41% of the adults who took two or more different non-prescription medications a day had moderate to high stress overload scores while only 23% of the non-users had this same range of stress scores

### **10. Preventive Counseling Services**

*Regular preventive exams are an essential part to a healthy lifestyle. They become even more important after the age of forty. In our efforts to promote preventive counseling services it is important to address the finding that 30% or more of adults could benefit from receiving the following services: (1) blood sugar and cholesterol checks, (2) prostate exams in men, and (3) education of patients by health professional on the importance of exercise and eating habits in lowering the risk of a number of health problems.*

#### Physical Exam

- At least 80% of adults have had a physical in the past 2 years
- 1% of adults have never had a physical exam

#### Blood Pressure (BP) Check & Reading

- At least 89% of the participants have had a BP check in the last 1 – 2 years
- Most (95%) of the participants indicated that their last BP reading was normal

#### Blood Sugar Test & Reading

- 2 out of 3 (64%) adults have had their blood sugar taken in the past 2 years
- Most (96%) of the participants indicated that their last blood sugar reading was normal

#### Blood Cholesterol Test & Reading

- Approximately 70% of the participants have had their blood cholesterol taken in the past 5 years
- 4 in every 5 (83%) adults indicated that their last blood cholesterol reading was normal
- Just over 2% reported a high cholesterol level at their last cholesterol reading
- 15% did not know or were not sure of their blood cholesterol level

#### Prostate Exam

- Approximately 40% of the men 40 and older have never had a prostate exam



### Education on Eating and Health from a Health Professional

- Nearly 1 in every 2 adults (42%) has not received education on eating practices that could lower their risk of health problems
- Of those who received education 32% received advice in the past 12 months

### Education on Exercise and Health from a Health Professional

- 1 in every 3 (34%) adults has not received education on how exercise could lower their risk of health problems
- Of those who received education 40% received advice in the past 12 months

## **11. Women's Health**

*More than 70% of women are regularly participating in preventive exams that test for specific cancers in women. While we applaud most women for their effort toward disease prevention, we must support and motivate those who have not taken these preventive measures.*

### Women Who Ever Had a Mammogram

- Most (90%) women 40 and older have had a mammogram
- ½ (53%) of all women 18 and older have had a mammogram

### Length of Time Since Last Mammogram

- 3 in every 4 women (77%) 40 or older have had a mammogram in the past year
- 1 in every 4 women (23%) had a mammogram over a year ago

### Women Who Ever Had a Clinical Breast Exam

- Most (92%) women 40 and older have had a clinical breast exam
- 87% of all women 18 and older have had a clinical breast exam

### Length of Time Since Last Breast Exam

- 4 in every 5 (83%) women 40 or older have had a breast exam in the past year
- 2 in every 3 (74%) women 18 and older have had a breast exam in the past year

### Women Who Ever Had a Pap Smear

- Most (95%) women 18 and older have had a Pap Smear

### Length of Times since Last Pap Smear

- About 3 in every 4 (73%) women 18 or older have had a Pap Smear in the past year

## **12. HIV, AIDS and Sexual Practices**

*High-risk behaviours contribute the major burden of HIV and AIDS cases in the world today. In this study 21% of adults indicated that they changed their sexual behaviour (in the past year) based on their knowledge regarding HIV. This result supports the role of health promotion and education in influencing health behavioural change. The role of health professionals in educating their patients must be encouraged given the finding that 1 in every 2 adults reported no education or information regarding sexual practices or family planning.*

### Professionals, Patients and Sex Education

- 1 in every 2 (55%) adults has not received any education or information from their doctor as it relates to sexual practices or family planning

### Have You Ever Been Tested For HIV?

- 1 in every 2 (52%) adults indicated that they have been tested for HIV

### What was the Main Reason for Your Last HIV Test?

- About 41% of adults indicated other or unstated, 27% pregnancy, 12% to find out if they had HIV and 12% related to the hospital or surgery

### Changes in Sexual Behaviour in the Past 12 Months due to Increased Knowledge Regarding HIV

- About 21% of adults indicated they changed as result of increased knowledge regarding HIV
- 29% of the participants did not answer this question on sexual behaviour change

### Changes Related to Sexual Partners and Abstinence in the Past 12 Months

- 29% of adults decreased their number of sex partners or became abstinent
- 40% of the participants did not answer the question on sex partners
- 45% of those who responded to abstinence in the past 12 months were still abstinent
- 70% of the participants did not answer the question on abstinence

### Changes Related to Condom Use in the Past 12 Months

- 23% of adults reported they always use a condom for protection
- 39% of the participants did not answer the question on the use of condoms