

# Prime Timers Focus

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The Prime Timer Focus originated as an excerpt to Peer Links, containing articles of interest specifically to Prime Timers (persons with disabilities age 35 and over). Topics include aging and disability, health and wellness, retirement, relationships with our children, etc.

We would love to hear from you, so if you have any articles, poetry, quick anecdotes, recipes or a few words of wisdom that you wish to share with others, please feel free to contact the Peer Support/ Volunteer Coordinator at [cilt@cilt.ca](mailto:cilt@cilt.ca)

## Welcome Prime Timers

Welcome to the first issue of "Prime Timer Focus," an extra little to bonus to "Peer Links", for all members of the Prime Timers.

In this newsletter we will try and bring to you articles on issues of interest to Prime Timers. We would love to hear from you, so if you have any articles, poetry, quick anecdotes, recipes or a few words of wisdom that you wish to share with others, please feel free to contact us at CILT (contact information at the end of this publication).

The Prime Timers is a peer support group that was created out of an interest by the 35+ group. Many of CILT's peer activities have seemed to attract adults with disabilities who are in the "under 30s" group. As a result, we decided that it was time to respond to a growing need in the community for a group especially dedicated to the interests of those who are 35 years of age and over. So far, the Prime Timers have enjoyed a number of activities, including a pot luck supper, bingo nights, special interest workshops and dinner outings. What makes the Prime Timers unique from our other peer support groups is that everyone in the group shares similar passions, concerns and interests because of the fact that they are interacting with others in their age bracket.

On several occasions, the Prime Timers have teamed up for events with members of the PDN (Parenting with a Disability Network). By teaming up with the PDN, we are able to share resources and cut costs at the same time. We found that members of these groups seem to share similar concerns and common interests. For example, many Prime Timers are parents with disabilities, and many parents with disabilities are over the age of 35 years. I would like to thank Kimberly McKennitt, coordinator of the PDN, for inviting the Prime Timers to join them for special interest workshops, picnics, and mid-winter get-togethers.

All of these events have been very successful!

## Upcoming Event

The Prime Timers and PDN are teaming up once again for our annual "Mid-Winter Get-Together." The event is being held at CILT on Saturday, February 12, 2005 from 1 to 4 PM. You should have already received your invitation. Join as we listen to the musical sounds of Melody Mist, a dynamic duo who sing and play a variety of instruments. If you would like to attend this event, please call Nancy at CILT.

Refreshments and attendant services will be provided.

## Trans Fats: No Longer a Secret

*by Anita Romaniw, Community Nutritionist, Fraser Health Authority, 2004 Retirement With A Purpose, a ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ. RWAP is part of the TruthMedia Network.*

If you have ever tried figuring out the fat grams on food labels, you may have realized they don't add up. That's because the trans fat content never had to be declared on labels...until now. Manufacturers have until the end of 2005 to apply new federal labeling regulations to food products, which includes listing 13 key nutrients, along with trans fat. Dietitians are pleased with these new regulations, given the bad reputation that trans fats have earned.

### What are Transfats?

Trans fats are formed when liquid vegetable oil is heated and hydrogen gas is bubbled through, producing a more solid, saturated fat similar to animal fat. Whenever liquid fats are hydrogenated, trans fats are created. **If the ingredient list includes "hydrogenated," "partially hydrogenated," or "vegetable oil shortening," you can be sure the product contains trans fat.** Foods prepared with hydrogenated fats go rancid more slowly, resulting in a longer shelf life, making them ideal for commercial use and frying. Like saturated animal fats however, hydrogenated fats increase blood cholesterol, clog arteries and increase risk of heart disease. They may also contribute to Alzheimer's disease by blocking blood flow to the brain.

### Which Foods Contain Trans Fats?

Trans fats are commonly found in microwave popcorn, some margarines, packaged cake and baking mixes, donuts, bakery items, fast foods, fried foods, pizzas, waffles, ramen noodles, breaded meats and fish, snack chips, crackers,

non-dairy creamers and whipped toppings.

Trans fats are not essential nutrients and provide no known benefit to human health. Given that the World Health Organization has declared no level of trans fat as safe, human consumption should be as low as possible. After tracking 90,000 nurses over two decades, it was found that consuming even one gram of trans fat a day (found in two crackers) for 10 years increased risk of heart disease by 20%. It is estimated that Canadians consume a much higher average of 10 grams of trans fats daily.

Whether you are an adult, child, male, female, pregnant or nursing, all can benefit heart health and more by trading in commercially-prepared and fast foods for fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts and seeds. Use liquid vegetable oils and whole grain ingredients to bake your own cookies, muffins, loaves and other favourite snack foods. The more "back to the basics" we get with daily food choices, the less hydrogenated and trans fats we'll see on the label to begin with.

### Healthy Bodies Fight Stress Better

*Article found at [www.aarp.com](http://www.aarp.com), National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, 2001.*

Everyone gets stressed. When stress strikes, you want your body to be able to handle it.

Stress can wear your body down, mentally and physically. But a healthy body can cope with stress better than an unhealthy one.

There are several important things you can do to keep your body healthy. Basically, it boils down to living a healthy lifestyle. That means:

**Staying active.** Physical activity is an excellent stress-buster. When you become stressed, your body releases extra chemicals such as glucose and adrenaline - the fight or flight response. Physical activity helps burn up these extra chemicals so your body can return to normal. It also helps you stay healthy by keeping your bones and muscles strong, helping you sleep better, and warding off chronic illness like diabetes and heart disease. Try to get at least 30 minutes of physical activity on most days of the week and more whenever you can.

**Sticking to a healthy diet.** That means lots of fruit, vegetables, and whole grains, and less sugar, red meat, refined and processed foods, and saturated fats. If you drink alcohol, limit yourself to a drink a day if you're a woman and two drinks a day if you're a man. If you smoke, quit!

**Having balance in your life.** We all have responsibilities - work, family, social. But give yourself permission to take time to just relax and have fun, too. Do

something you enjoy or have always wanted to do: take an art, dance, cooking, or language class; sign up for a 5K race; meet friends for regular walks.

**Keeping a good attitude.** Focusing on the positive isn't always easy, but it's better for your health. Some things that could help include:

Laughing. Laughing is a positive emotion, and it's a lot more fun than fretting! Finding humor in a situation can make you feel better under stressful circumstances. Watching a funny video or reading a funny book or newspaper column can relieve tension and help you forget about what's causing you stress.

Staying in the present. Don't waste energy worrying about the past - it's over! Keep your mind positively set on the present and try to enjoy each day.

Sharing your feelings. Sometimes we feel we're burdening people with our problems if we bring up things that trouble us. But trusted friends are usually happy to listen. You also can confide in a family or clergy member or mental health professional. Keeping things to yourself can add to your stress.

**Getting enough sleep.** Not getting enough sleep also increases stress and can make you less able to handle stressful situations. Regardless of age, most adults need about eight hours of restful sleep a night. But sometimes stress keeps you awake, making matters worse. If you have trouble sleeping, there are some things you can try to help you sleep better. Try taking a bath before bed; avoiding alcohol, caffeine, nicotine, and heavy meals near bedtime; and rearranging your room to avoid distractions like light and noise. If these don't work and you still have trouble sleeping for three weeks or longer, talk to your doctor, a sleep disorder expert or mental health professional.

Sleeplessness can be one of many signs that your body is under stress. Other body signals include headaches, backaches, sleeplessness, digestive problems, tics, hair loss, concentration problems, a racing heart, and panic attacks. If these problems don't go away with your own efforts to reduce stress, talk to your doctor. Arming yourself against stress is just one of the many benefits of having a healthy body. You'll also add years to your life and life to your years!

### **How Vulnerable Are You To Stress?**

In modern society, most of us can't avoid stress. But we can learn to behave in ways that lessen its effects. Researchers have identified a number of factors that affect one's

vulnerability to stress - among them are eating and sleeping habits, caffeine and alcohol intake, and how we express our emotions. The following questionnaire is designed to help you discover your vulnerability quotient and to pinpoint trouble spots. Rate each item from 1 (always) to 5 (never), according to how much of the time the statement is true of you. Be sure to mark each item, even if it does not

apply to you - for example, if you don't smoke, circle 1 next to item six.

	Always	Sometimes	Never
I eat at least one hot, balanced meal a day.	1	2 3 4	5
I get seven to eight hours of sleep at least four nights a week.	1	2 3 4	5
I give and receive affection regularly.	1	2 3 4	5
I have at least one relative within 50 miles, on whom I can rely	1	2 3 4	5
I exercise to the point of perspiration at least twice a week.	1	2 3 4	5
I limit myself to less than half a pack of cigarettes a day.	1	2 3 4	5
I take fewer than five alcohol drinks a week.	1	2 3 4	5
I am the appropriate weight for my height.	1	2 3 4	5
I have an income adequate to meet basic expenses.	1	2 3 4	5
I get strength from my religious beliefs.	1	2 3 4	5
I regularly attend club or social activities.	1	2 3 4	5
I have a network of friends and acquaintances.	1	2 3 4	5
I have one or more friends to confide in about personal matters	1	2 3 4	5
I am in good health (including eye-sight, hearing, Teeth).	1	2 3 4	5
I am able to speak openly about my feelings when angry or worried.	1	2 3 4	5
I have regular conversations with the people I live with about domestic problems - e.g. chores and money.	1	2 3 4	5
I do something for fun at least once a week.	1	2 3 4	5

I am able to organize my time effectively. 1 2 3 4 5

I drink fewer than three cups of coffee  
(or other caffeine-rich drinks) a day. 1 2 3 4 5

I take some quiet time for myself during the day. 1 2 3 4 5

To get your score, add up the figures and subtract 20. A score below 10 indicates excellent resistance to stress. A score over 30 indicates some vulnerability to stress; you are seriously vulnerable if your score is over 50. You can make yourself less vulnerable by reviewing the items on which you scored three or higher and trying to modify them. Notice that nearly all of them describe situations and behaviors over which you have a great deal of control. Concentrate first on those that are easiest to change - for example, eating a hot, balanced meal daily and having fun at least once a week - before tackling those that seem difficult.

**CILT** is a non-profit resource organization, consumer-controlled and community based. **CILT** is funded through the United Way, City of Toronto grants, Federal and Provincial government grants, donations, earned income and membership support.

**CILT** is a consumer-controlled, community-based resource organization. We help people with disabilities to learn Independent Living skills and integrate into the community.

(Please note: **CILT** is a resource agency and does not do any political, systemic or group advocacy!)

**CILT** operates on the philosophy of the Independent Living movement which was developed in response to traditional rehabilitation services models. **CILT's** aim is to develop and implement dignified social services that empower individuals rather than create dependencies. We encourage people with disabilities to take control of their own lives by exercising their right to examine options, make choices, take risks and even make mistakes.

**CILT** is one of 25 members of the Canadian Association of Independent Living Centres (CAILC) and one of 10 members of the Ontario Network of Independent Living Centres (ONILC).

**CILT** is also unique in that a majority of Board and staff positions must be held by persons with a disability, thus ensuring that the service is directed and controlled by the