

Health promotion strategies



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Editorial—focus on physical activity

Welcome to the third edition of *Health Promotion Strategies* for 2005. This edition highlights policy, programs, strategies and partnerships that focus on physical activity promotion.

At least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity each day is enough to bring about many health benefits, however, increasing your levels of activity can multiply the benefits. Regular physical activity:

- reduces the risk of dying prematurely from heart disease or stroke
- reduces the risk of developing heart disease, colon cancer and type II diabetes
- helps prevent/reduce hypertension
- helps prevent/reduce osteoporosis (reducing the risk of hip fracture by up to 50 per cent in women)
- promotes psychological wellbeing, reduces stress, anxiety, depression and loneliness
- helps prevent or control risky behaviours, especially among children and young people, like tobacco, alcohol or other substance use, unhealthy diet or violence
- helps control weight and lower the risk of becoming obese by 50 per cent
- can improve management of painful conditions, like back pain or knee pain.

Physical activity can positively influence strategies to improve diet, discourage use of tobacco, alcohol and drugs, reduce violence, enhance functional capacity and promote social interaction and integration. Physical activity also has economic benefits for society in reduced health care costs, increased productivity and healthier social environments.

The Department of Human Services has made a significant commitment to the promotion of physical activity, healthy eating and active communities, through the Victorian Government's *Go for your life* strategy.

To support *Go for your life*, the Victorian Government has committed:

- \$10 million over four years to promote physical activity
- \$10 million over four years to prevent obesity and diabetes
- \$1.9 million to promote healthy and active living for senior Victorians
- \$21 million to boost volunteering and community participation.

The *Go for your life* strategy recognises that action needs to occur at all levels of our community. This community action is reflected in the breadth of articles and case studies in this bulletin.

I hope you continue to find this bulletin useful, and welcome your feedback and suggestions. The next edition will focus on initiatives aimed at promoting healthy eating and increasing the access to and affordability of nutritious food.

Dr Robert Hall
Director Public Health
Chief Health Officer

Health promotion in DHS... spotlight on Neighbourhood Renewal

Neighbourhood Renewal uses a whole-of-government approach to bring together the resources and ideas of residents, governments, businesses and community groups to tackle disadvantage in areas with high concentrations of public housing.

The Victorian Burden of Disease Study (1999)¹ indicates a strong correlation between disease, low socioeconomic status and disadvantaged neighbourhoods. An Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2004)² report also found that people in the most disadvantaged areas had significantly higher all-cause death rates.

Neighbourhood Renewal is tackling the social determinants of health, such as unemployment, housing, crime and social exclusion, to narrow the gap between the most disadvantaged communities in Victoria and the rest of the state. The initiative is led by the Office of Housing and Community Building in the Department of Human Services, as part of the government's *Growing Victoria Together* agenda.

Each Neighbourhood Renewal site has a place-based manager and team that connects residents with services and policy makers. Change is driven by a six-point plan of action to:

- increase pride and participation in the community by residents
- enhance housing and the physical environment
- lift employment, training and education opportunities and expand local economic activities
- improve personal safety and reduce crime
- promote health and wellbeing
- increase access to services and improve government responsiveness.

Since 2001, Neighbourhood Renewal has been rolled out in 15 locations across metropolitan and regional Victoria. Initial sites include Latrobe Valley (Morwell, Moe, Churchill Heights and Traralgon), Wendouree West (Ballarat), Collingwood Public Housing Estate, Atherton Gardens (Fitzroy), East Eaglehawk (Bendigo), Long Gully (Bendigo), Shepparton (Parkside), Seymour, Maidstone and Braybrook (Melbourne's West), Corio and Norlane (North Geelong). In 2003–04, new projects commenced in Colac, Werribee, Broadmeadows, Ashburton/Ashwood/Chadstone and Doveton/Eumemmerring.

New funding of \$29.8 million over four years will enable Neighbourhood Renewal to expand to four new areas, extend all projects to eight years, and provide additional resources to support employment and community infrastructure development.

To date, there are signs of strong resident support for Neighbourhood Renewal. Residents are getting involved in the planning, decision making, implementation and evaluation of projects; partnerships are developing between residents, business, community and government; and action plans that identify local priority issues and solutions are being implemented.

These local partnerships between residents, businesses, community leaders and government will enable Neighbourhood Renewal to continue to work towards creating safer, healthier and more vibrant communities.

1 Department of Human Services, 1999, Victorian Burden of Disease Study, State Government of Victoria, Melbourne.

2 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2004. Australia's health 2004. Canberra: AIHW.

Further information

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10,000 Steps in Casey

10,000 steps—the new buzzword in physical activity, is increasing awareness of the importance of physical activity and the level of physical activity occurring within the City of Casey.

The Casey Physical Activity Working Group, whose members include the City of Casey, Cardinia-Casey Community Health Service, the YMCA and the Dandenong District Division of General Practice, is piloting the program in Cranbourne. Through the pilot, the local library lends pedometer kits out just as they would lend a book.

The pedometer kits, which can be borrowed for a four-week period, contain a pedometer, information on local physical activity opportunities, local walking maps, and a local retailer discount voucher book. Preliminary evaluation results indicate that the program has been successful in raising awareness of the need to increase physical activity levels in everyday life.

The program was originally targeted at older adults; however, an unexpected outcome is that many mothers are loaning pedometers to their children to encourage them to be more active.

Once the pilot is complete and the evaluation results have been compiled, a kit will be developed for other libraries and community agencies to implement the program across the City of Casey.

Further information

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Starting Blocks—All Women, All Ages Project



Over the past seven months, the Starting Blocks—All Women, All Ages Project has encouraged 136 girls and women in the Braybrook and Maidstone communities to participate in local physical activity programs.

The Women's Participation Program (WPP) model, developed by Womensport and Recreation Vic is used to encourage participation.

In November 2004, 10 community members from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities received training to deliver WPP. The 10-week program introduces the women to physical activity. The weekly two-hour sessions include information and group discussion as well as one hour of exercise. This year, two groups have run from RecWest—a Somali group of nine participants and a Vietnamese group of 31 participants. A Sudanese program with nine participants has also commenced.

The women join in activities such as yoga, gentle exercise and line dancing, which they choose as a group. Guest speakers attend to talk about topics such as diabetes prevention and nutrition.

After the 10 weeks, the aim is to link the women into an activity in the community on a regular basis. This has been a very successful model, with results including:

- some women from the Vietnamese group are now regulars at the gym, water aerobics, and gentle exercise classes while others have started dancing lessons

- all of the Somali women continue to participate in gentle exercise and yoga sessions
- following an Ethiopian WPP, a volleyball team was started, which has a coach and 16 regular participants, and trains and plays one night a week.

A Girls Can Do It Program is also run with students from Braybrook Secondary College. This modified WPP gives participants the opportunity to select activities to try over five weeks. Only 10 girls participate at a time, with each term focusing on a different year level. The girls are chosen with assistance from the student welfare worker who targets girls who are inactive and don't like to participate in physical education at school.

Three girls from the Girls Can Do It Program have joined a soccer club, two girls have joined a basketball team, one a netball team and one girl has started playing tennis.

The project is a Maribyrnong City Council initiative and has received funding and support from VicHealth and Department of Human Services' Neighbourhood Renewal program.

Further information

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fun 'n healthy in Moreland!

Twenty-four schools in Moreland are getting involved in a five-year project that promotes healthy development of children through diet and exercise.

This project is jointly funded by the Department of Human Services and the Department of Victorian Communities as a key component of the whole of government *Go for your life* strategy.

fun 'n healthy in Moreland!, a partnership project between Moreland Community Health Service and Deakin University, will look at what influences the healthy development of primary school children, such as food, play, activity and self-esteem.

As a first stage of the project, baseline data was collected on children's food habits, physical activity and self-esteem levels, to build an understanding of children's health in each school community.

In stage two, 12 randomly selected schools will conduct *fun 'n healthy* programs and 12 schools will continue as usual. *fun 'n healthy* programs are designed to increase fruit and vegetable consumption, replace high sugar level drinks with water, increase physical activity and improve self-esteem in children.

The *fun 'n healthy* team will work with the 12 schools in Term 3 to select programs that are relevant for their community. Each program will be implemented on multiple levels within the school to sustain long term change. Programs may include practical classroom activities, supporting teachers and parents to promote physical education, changing or strengthening school policy, developing partnerships with local services, and linking physical activity to other school activities.

The *fun 'n healthy* programs will build on community enthusiasm and cultural pride to meet the needs of Moreland's diverse community.

Further information

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Promoting health through sport

Over recent years, VicHealth has focused on initiatives that aim to improve participation in sport at the community level. Recognising the link between this aim and the need for sports clubs to attract and retain members, VicHealth developed the Partnerships for Health Scheme.

Through this scheme, VicHealth works with state sporting associations, clubs and venues to:

- encourage more people to participate in sport and recreation
- increase the sport sector's capacity to provide accessible sport and active recreation experiences for the diversity of groups in the community.

VicHealth funds the associations to undertake activities to increase participation in healthy and welcoming environments, such as developing policies and practices that promote health, promoting environments that are conducive to health, promoting the role sport plays in improving health, and expanding the range of people who participate in sport.

In collaboration with Deakin University, VicHealth developed a health promotion short course to assist sporting association representatives to understand the synergies between sport and health and to strengthen the capacity of the sector to deliver health promotion outcomes.

To date, the Partnerships for Health Scheme has developed frameworks for including participation programs as part of core business and introduced programs to address barriers to participation.

Through the scheme, information is shared across sports about strategies that increase participation and create healthy and welcoming environments.

Further information

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Bridging Gaps with Basketball



There are many players in the Bridging Gaps with Basketball program—it is funded by VicHealth, managed by the Northern Migrant Resource Centre (NMRC) in Preston and supported by Victoria Police. As a result of this partnership, refugee young people in the northern suburbs have the opportunity to connect with members of their local community, services and other young people.

The aim of the program is to engage young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, in organised sport, in this case, basketball. These young people are predominantly refugee youth and some are referred from the Department of Human Services Refugee Minor Program.

For many CALD young people, barriers such as transport, cost and lack of parental support limit their ability to participate in competitive sport. Bridging Gaps with Basketball attempts to address some of these barriers. The NMRC Preston provides transport, uniforms and

assistance with registration. Local police officers contribute their off-duty time as coaches and, more importantly, as mentors for the young people.

The program has three boys teams and one girls team registered in the Eastern Districts Junior Basketball Association competition. The program started with predominantly Somali young people but has now expanded to three new teams of young people from Sudan.

For these young people the program offers greater access to sport, increased physical activity, a distraction to antisocial behaviour, increased cultural awareness, improved relationships with police and greater social connectedness.

The aim of the program is to engage young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, in organised sport, in this case, basketball.

The NMRC is seeking funding or sponsorship to continue the project after 2005 and indefinitely to assist many other newly arrived communities who have little access to sport and recreational activities. The NMRC sees Bridging Gaps as an important part of its broader strategic direction to improve access and social connectedness for all newly arrived communities.

Further information

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Active Fawkner— promoting family participation in sport



More than 600 families in the northern suburb of Fawkner have participated in Active Fawkner, a project that promotes sport and active recreation.

Active Fawkner holds regular 'come and try' sessions at local sporting reserves where three or more clubs give families an opportunity to participate in activities such as soccer, tennis, table tennis, lawn bowls, taekwondo, darts, swimming, athletics, basketball, volleyball, netball, break dancing and football.

Fawkner is a culturally diverse suburb and the most socio-economically disadvantaged neighbourhood in the City of Moreland. Active Fawkner aims to increase participation in sporting clubs by families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and increase the number of volunteers involved in local sporting activities.

This project is managed by the Active Fawkner Network, which was established in 2004 and includes sporting clubs, primary and secondary schools, young people, club volunteers and the local community health centre and neighbourhood house.

Active Fawkner is funded through VicHealth and proudly supported by Moreland City Council.

Further information

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Building Active Communities in Baw Baw

The Baw Baw Active Communities Task Group, formed in 2004, is promoting partnerships between the health, sport and recreation and education sectors to take a coordinated approach to increasing participation in physical activity across the municipality.

Growing from a need to get older adults and residents of smaller communities active, the task group focuses on partnerships and planning; education, information and training; creating supportive environments for physical activity; municipal-wide walking strategy; and organisational development.

'This project brought people together, making us more aware of the need to exercise to keep fit, and the encouragement to persevere.'

Task group members are Baw Baw Shire, West Gippsland Health Care Group, Gippsland Sports Assembly, Warragul Leisure Centre, School Focused Youth Services, Central West Gippsland Primary Care Partnership, Central West Gippsland Division of General Practice, and Warragul Community House.

To date, project outcomes include:

- the roll out of outreach programs in Longwarry, Erica/Rawson and Noojee
- community consultation within 11 towns to identify their physical activity needs
- development of a sport and recreation information site on the Baw Baw Shire website
- producing a documentary that highlights the health and social outcomes achieved
- improved planning and sharing of ideas amongst local government, health services and sport and recreation organisations.

The task group has also been funded to expand existing programs and implement new ones. VicHealth has provided funds to extend the Active Communities project, support more outreach programs and link to local projects. VicHealth and Central West Gippsland PCP have funded Move Your Feet in Baw Baw to improve walking opportunities across the municipality, and the Department of Human Services has funded the Two Towns Trail Good Practice project which will look at alternate routes for the Warragul to Drouin walking/cycling track and support learning around environments for physical activity.

Other projects include Walking School Bus, Commonwealth Games Funding, Central West Gippsland PCP Falls Prevention project, Gippsport's Local Government Sport and Recreation Info Directory Enhancement project, Gippsland Women and Physical Activity Strategy and Women's Compass Network.

'I was aware that I was losing strength and balance as I aged, this program has meant I have gained an appreciation of what can be regained as well as the confidence to go onto further exercise programs.'

The Active Communities Task Group is identifying what organisations are doing around physical activity and what still needs to be done, pulling together resources and expertise, planning for the future, and building on great ideas while avoiding duplication.

The project model is being used in the development of the Latrobe Active Communities Network and similar networks across South Coast, East Gippsland and Wellington.

Further information

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Walking School Bus benefits more communities

VicHealth's Walking School Bus program is a simple, low cost approach that tackles the issues of transportation, environmental pollution and health.

A Walking School Bus is a school bus powered by legs. Children walk in a group to school, with an adult 'driver' in the front and an adult 'conductor' at the rear. The free bus travels along a set route to or from school, picking up or dropping off children along the way at meeting points along the route.

Two communities in Melbourne have joined the growing list of neighbourhoods that are experiencing the benefits of the Walking School Bus Program.

VicHealth funds local governments to work with local schools and community agencies to establish Walking School Buses to promote physical activity and community strengthening.

Southvale Primary School, in the City of Greater Dandenong, has students from a diverse range of culture and language backgrounds. The students come from 32 different cultures and 88 per cent do not speak English at home. Most of the parents come from a refugee background.

The Walking School Bus Program started slowly at Southvale due to language and cultural barriers. Parents didn't understand the concept and many were wary of allowing their children to travel to school with others.

However, the program has progressed and the school now has three routes that run every day—hail, rain or shine. As Sue Barford, Principal of Southvale Primary School explains, an unexpected and welcome benefit of the program has been the connections families have made outside of school. 'Families that lived in the same street but did not know each other have become firm friends,' she said. 'Mums who were fearful of leaving home to bring children to school are now

entering the school and participating in the life of the school. They belong to parent groups, assist teachers and help in the gardens. Friendships are made during these social exchanges and, as a result, educational programs for parents have been established—meeting a great need in the community.'

... an unexpected and welcome benefit of the program has been the connections families have made outside of school.

The program has also alleviated the traffic congestion outside the school. Since the Walking School Bus started, traffic congestion has reduced markedly and walking or riding to school is now a part of the children's daily lives.

The City of Greater Dandenong has assisted the school by running training programs for parents.

In the Glendonald Estate in the La Trobe Shire (Gippsland), the Walking School Bus is seen as more than a vehicle for exercise. John Turner, Assistant Principal of Churchill Primary School, describes it as 'a vehicle for improving school connectedness and attendance, and community strengthening'. The Glendonald community experiences significant disadvantage, including high rates of unemployment and domestic violence and low levels of education.

Their Walking School Bus was launched on 14 November 2003 and, unlike other buses which primarily promote physical exercise as a motivating factor, the Walking School Bus was introduced to assist students in getting to school, and to get them there on time. And the results have been excellent. 'Students were beginning to arrive at school on time and in 2004 our absentee rate dropped from 19.2 to 13.9 days per student, which is dramatic indeed. Our attendance rates for this year indicate an absentee rate of below 10—it's a bit early to tell, but we are all hopeful', said John Turner.

Involvement with the Walking School Bus has also improved the school's connection with the community and its involvement in the Neighbourhood Renewal Program. As a result, the school now has access to people who are aware of available programs and grants and have supported the development of other programs, such as relating to healthy eating, arts, literacy and music.

'Our school is beginning to be seen as proactive, innovative, community based, welcoming and energised', said John Turner.

VicHealth Awards 2005

The closing date for nominations for the 2005 VicHealth Awards is Friday 23 September 2005.

Visit <http://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au> for more information.

Strength in partnerships Pedestrians get Greenlight

Older But Stronger (OBS) is a community-based strength training program that supports frail, older people with physical, social or emotional needs to participate in safe, effective and regular exercise in a community setting.

Developed by physiotherapists at Ranges Community Health Services (CHS), in collaboration with community fitness centres, OBS was successfully piloted in 2000 with funding through VicHealth's *Active for Life* Community Grants Scheme.

OBS has now been expanded to involve four community fitness centres, 16 classes and more than 180 participants each week. Procedures for assessment, referral and support have been set up and independent Master Classes introduced to cater for the improved fitness levels of participants and the general 50+ population.

Initial findings of a review of the OBS program are very positive with participants reporting physical and social benefits:

'Doing exercise with positive people in own age group in safe and attractive environment'

'More social contact. Feel stronger and less depressed'

'It's given me my life back'.

The fitness centres also recognise the value of the program. Even though OBS is not a 'money-maker', managers remarked that the 'client group is highly motivated and consistent' and the program 'allows full utilisation of centre' and 'improves atmosphere within gym'.

Physiotherapists at Ranges CHS see the long-term benefits: 'it is consistent with an holistic social model of health' and 'by linking with a long-term health message (fitness) there is less rebound to waiting lists'.

Further information

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The City of Port Phillip's Greenlight Project is making pedestrians priority number one at major intersections.

In 2004, the City of Port Phillip conducted the Greenlight Project, a jointly funded study with VicHealth into the 'crossability' of intersections of major roads in the Cities of Port Phillip, Geelong and Bayside. The study, which investigated how traffic signals at intersections affected people's decision to walk or not to walk, particularly to and from Victorian primary schools, revealed that many people are frightened and intimidated by having so little time to cross busy roads.

As a result, the City of Port Phillip has made changes at some major intersections.

Newly installed pedestrian lights at the intersection of Richardson, Pickles and Liardet Streets give walkers 40 per cent more time to cross and the 'green man' appears automatically. On Pickles Street, pedestrians get a four-second 'early-green' advance ahead of vehicles turning into it.

'More Walking, More Often, More Time' is promoted through the City of Port Phillip's new Walking Plan, and the Greenlight Project recommendations will be pursued to improve walkability throughout the municipality, especially at busy roads.

Primary Care Partnerships (PCPs) and Physical Activity (PA) project

More Primary Care Partnerships (PCPs) across Victoria are focusing on physical activity as a key health promotion priority and making progress towards implementing integrated physical activity programs across catchments. In recognition of this, the Department of Human Services has engaged VICFIT to support PCPs in integrated physical activity promotion within their communities from 2004-06.

The PCP and PA project will provide two levels of support to PCPs:

1. general support for all interested PCPs, including information and training
2. more specific and intensive support for planning, implementation and evaluation in 10 selected PCPs.

Darren Ray, City of Port Phillip Mayor, says: 'Since we started the Walking School Bus program three years ago with VicHealth, we've discovered that the time allotted at crossings with lights can be woefully inadequate. Kids are still crossing the road when the 'red man' is flashing. And it's not just a problem for kids; crossing the road can be a formidable challenge for everyone, most especially older people.'

'This council, like many others, is going all out to encourage more people, especially children, to walk more. It's about time pedestrians as road users got the green light. The private car should not be the only king of the road.'

For a full copy of *The Greenlight Project: Re-directing Pedestrian Priority at Signalised Crossings on Major Roads*, go to: http://www.portphillip.vic.gov.au/walking_well.html

Further information

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Further information

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What's on—what's new?

Victorian Community Indicators (VCI) Project

The VCI Project is a VicHealth-funded initiative designed to support local governments develop and use community indicators to measure health, wellbeing and sustainability and improve citizen engagement, community planning and policy making. The VCI builds on and complements the VicHealth Leading the Way project and *Environments for health*, the Department of Human Services Municipal Public Health Planning Framework.

The VCI is being implemented over 2005 and 2006 in partnership with local governments and project stakeholders.

Further information

Visit the VCI website at www.communityindicators.net.au

Melbourne Walk21 Conference

This premier international conference on walking and liveable communities will be held on 23–25 October 2006 at the Melbourne Exhibition Centre.

Further information

Kinect Australia
Tel: (03) 8320 0100
Email: walk21@kinectaustralia.org.au

Fifth National Physical Activity Conference

'Physical activity interventions: promoting innovation, measuring success' will be held on 13–15 October 2005 at the Melbourne Convention Centre.

Further information

For information and registration details, visit: <http://www.sma.org.au/ACSMS/2005/>

Evidence-based health promotion

The Department of Human Services commissioned Deakin University to produce the *Planning for Healthy Communities evidence based resource: Reducing the risk of cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes through healthier environments and lifestyles*. This resource, which focuses on physical activity and nutrition strategies, can be downloaded from <http://www.health.vic.gov.au/healthpromotion/quality/cd.htm>

Further information

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National Physical Activity Guidelines and Recommendations

The Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing has published the following guidelines and recommendations for the minimum levels of physical activity required for good health:

- *Active kids are healthy kids: Australia's physical activity recommendations for 5–12 year olds* (December 2004).
- *Get out and get active: Australia's physical activity recommendations for 12–18 year olds* (December 2004).
- *An active way to better health: National physical activity guidelines for adults* (May 1999, reprinted 2005).

Further information

Tel: 1800 020 103 and ask for the PHD publications request line.
Visit the website www.healthyactive.gov.au

Watch this space

The Rural & Regional Health & Aged Care Services Division (RRHACS), Department of Human Services, in partnership with regional offices and VicHealth, will be undertaking a consultation and information process to establish health promotion priorities for 2006–09.

For further information, contact Anita Thomas, Tel: (03) 9637 4046 or email: anita.thomas@dhs.vic.gov.au

A physical activity guide for senior Victorians

The Department for Victorian Communities has produced *A physical activity guide for senior Victorians* (March 2005), which provides information for senior Victorians to be physically active in everyday life. The guide can be downloaded from <http://www.goforyourlife.vic.gov.au/> or call the Office of Senior Victorians on (03) 9208 3873.

About this Publication

Editorial Committee

Strategic Support Group, Department of Human Services, Neighbourhood Renewal, VicHealth.

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Contributions for future editions of this bulletin are most welcome. Articles on healthy eating, to appear in the November 2005 edition, are due by 28 October.

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