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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport

### **PRESCRIPTION PROGRAM PROMOTES HEALTHY EVERYDAY CHOICES**

VICTORIA – More than 130 health professionals in the Greater Victoria area are helping their patients get active and eat healthier through an innovative community-based program that is promoting healthy lifestyle choices across southern Vancouver Island, announced Mary Polak, Minister of Healthy Living and Sport.

“Sometimes, the best prescription is simple, healthy lifestyle choices,” said Polak. “Through the ActNow BC Prescription for Health pilot program, health professionals have already written 5,000 prescriptions to help patients lead healthier lives by increasing their physical activity levels at recreation centres and also learning about eating healthier through nutritional seminars.”

Officially launched today at Oak Bay Recreation Centre, the pilot program is supported by the Active Communities initiative in Victoria and runs until Sept. 30, 2009. Since letters went out in November 2008 to promote the program to Victoria-based health professionals, 131 physicians, chiropractors and physiotherapists have registered.

“Patients in Victoria are now able to access their local recreation centre and receive healthy eating advice from a registered dietitian at no cost through the ActNow BC Prescription for Health pilot program,” said Ida Chong, MLA for Oak Bay-Gordon Head. “When we take steps to lead healthier lives, we can also help build stronger families and community spirit.”

Patients who participate in the program first receive a prescription from their health professional that contains contact information for a local recreation centre. The patient contacts the recreation centre to register for free informational seminars on healthy eating and physical activity and, after patients attend seminars, they receive a pedometer, coupon for fitness orientation, and an activity card that is worth five free admissions. Patients are contacted one month and six months after their seminar for a followup by their health professional.

“The ActNow BC Prescription for Health pilot program provides an opportunity for patients to receive a unique prescription that allows them to maintain and improve their health, while helping build a closer relationship with their health professional,” said Dr. Bill Mackie, president of the BC Medical Association.

The communities of Oak Bay, Esquimalt, Saanich, Sooke, Saanich Peninsula, Western Communities and Victoria are all involved.

“Health professionals need to discuss and advocate to their patients the importance of making everyday, healthy lifestyle choices,” said Dr. Art Hister, a member of the ActNow BC Leadership Council. “I encourage all health professionals in Victoria to enrol in the Prescription for Health pilot program so they can promote the significant health benefits to their patients.”

“We’re excited to be part of a three-way link that connects us with health professionals and their patients, who can make huge difference to their own health by learning how to eat healthy and be physically active,” said Grant Brown, sport co-ordinator at Oak Bay Recreation Centre.

The engagement and support of physicians to prescribe for physical activity is a concept that has been implemented through a number of initiatives internationally, including Green Prescription (New Zealand), Lifescripts (Australia) and Exercise is Medicine (U.S.). Nationally, the PACE Canada program provides physicians with a toolkit and guide to counselling individuals on healthy active living.

ActNow BC is government’s healthy living initiative that encourages British Columbians to eat more healthily, increase physical activity, eliminate tobacco use and make healthy choices in pregnancy. Join thousands of British Columbians in taking the ActNow BC Healthy Living Pledge and visit the ActNow BC website at [www.actnowbc.ca](http://www.actnowbc.ca).

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