



# An Educated Minute

from the Human Resources Department

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## Amaryllis Month (Huntington Disease)

Huntington disease (HD) is a hereditary brain disorder with devastating effects on both mind and body.

- One in every 1,000 Canadians is touched by HD – as an affected individual, person at risk, friend, family member or caregiver.
- One in every 10,000 Canadians has Huntington disease.
- Every child of a person with HD has a 50% risk of inheriting the disease.

Huntington's is usually diagnosed using neurological and psychological tests. Sometimes doctors use brain scans. Sometimes doctors use brain scans or genetic testing to confirm the diagnosis.

There are three main types of symptoms in Huntington disease:

1. physical symptoms including involuntary movement and clumsiness;
2. emotional symptoms including depression, irritability and obsessiveness; and,
3. cognitive symptoms including loss of ability to recall information, loss of attention and difficulty with decision-making.

There is a lot of variation in the symptoms and not every person will have every symptom. Symptoms also vary with each stage of the disease. People don't die from Huntington's itself, but from the complications such as choking, heart failure or infection.

There is also a juvenile form of Huntington disease. It can occur in individuals as young as five years of age. When HD appears in someone under the age of 20 years, the illness is recognized as "juvenile Huntington disease". Juvenile HD is characterized by a movement disorder that differs from that of affected adults.

There is still no cure for Huntington disease or its juvenile counterpart, and there are no treatments that can prevent HD or slow it down. However, the accelerating pace of research is offering more hope than ever before that a solution will be discovered one day soon.

The Huntington Society of Canada is a national network of volunteers and professionals working to find new treatments and ultimately a cure for Huntington disease, and to improve quality of life for people with HD and their families.

Every fall, Huntington Society volunteers sell Amaryllis bulb kits to raise money for the fight against Huntington disease. This beautiful plant is a symbol of their efforts to grow a brighter future for every member of the Huntington's community. Every Amaryllis kit sold is one step closer to a cure for HD, since the proceeds from each kit directly support Huntington's research and services. To date, Amaryllis volunteers have raised over a half million dollars for the fight against HD. **The Huntington Society of Canada** can be reached at:



*151 Frederick Street, Suite 400  
Kitchener, ON N2H 2M2  
info@hsc-ca.org*

The Corporation of the County of Renfrew

9 International Drive, Pembroke ON K8A 6W5

Telephone: (613) 735-7288 Toll Free: 1-800-273-0183 Fax: (613) 735-2081

<http://www.countyofrenfrew.on.ca/humanresources/EducatedMinute.htm>

