

# Employee Enhancement Newsletter

Helpful Resources From Your Employee Assistance Program

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## August's Chat Topic

August 19, 2009

### Elder Care Issues: Helping our Aging Loved Ones

Every month you'll have the opportunity to chat online with a trained counselor. These live chats are held from 6:00PM to 6:30PM CST.

## August 2009

### At A Glance

#### National Immunization Awareness Month

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/>

#### Cataract Awareness Month

<http://www.aao.org/aaosite/eyemd/cataract.cfm>

#### Children's Eye Health and Safety Month

<http://www.preventblindness.org/>

Source: 2009 National Health Observances, National Health Information Center, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C.



## National Immunization Awareness Month: Why Immunize?

### For Parents

Why immunize our children? Sometimes we are confused by the messages in the media. First we are assured that, thanks to vaccines, some diseases are almost gone from the U.S. But we are also warned to immunize our children, ourselves as adults, and the elderly.

### Diseases are becoming rare due to vaccinations.

It's true, some diseases (like polio and diphtheria) are becoming very rare in the U.S. Of course, they are becoming rare largely because we have been vaccinating against them. But it is still reasonable to ask whether it's really worthwhile to keep vaccinating. It's much like bailing out a boat with a slow leak. When we started bailing, the boat was filled with water. But we have been bailing fast and hard, and now it is almost dry. We could say, "Good. The boat is dry now, so we can throw away the bucket and relax." But the leak hasn't stopped. Before long we'd notice a little water seeping in, and soon it might be back up to the same level as when we started.

### Keep immunizing until disease is eliminated.

Unless we can "stop the leak" (eliminate the disease), it is important to keep immunizing. Even if there are only a few cases of disease today, if we take away the protection given by vaccination, more and more people will be infected and will spread disease to others. Soon we will undo the progress we have made over the years.

For more information on immunizations and vaccine-related topics, please go to <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/default.htm>.

## The Truth About Cataracts

Did you know that 20.5 million Americans age 40 and older have cataracts, one of the most curable causes of vision loss?

To recognize Cataract Awareness Month in August, Eye M.D.s want to debunk the myths about cataracts and remind people they don't have to live with vision loss from cataracts.

A cataract is the clouding of the eye's normally clear lens, blocking the passage of light needed for vision. They form slowly and cause no pain. Some stay small and hardly affect vision, but if the cataract does grow and begin to affect your vision, it can usually be removed with surgery.

Cataracts are the leading cause of blindness worldwide; however, in most cases, vision loss from cataracts is reversible. New techniques developed over the past decade have made cataract surgery one of the safest and most successful procedures available in terms of restoring quality of life to patients. Each year there are more than 1.6 million of these delicate eye surgeries performed in the United States.

For more information about cataracts and their treatment, please go to <http://www.aao.org/aaosite/eyemd/cataract.cfm>.

Deer Oaks EAP Services, your Employee Assistance Program, is always available to you and your dependents. If you are struggling with children, finances, or just want some practical advice on health or the mind-body connection, contact your EAP, Deer Oaks, at:

1-866-327-2400

[eap@deeroaks.com](mailto:eap@deeroaks.com)

[www.deeroaks.com](http://www.deeroaks.com)

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## Aging parents: 5 warning signs of health problems

If your parents are getting older, you may want to make sure they're taking care of themselves and staying healthy. But it's difficult to monitor the health of your aging parents from miles away. Use your next visit with your parents to ask about their health and find out if there's anything you can do to help them maintain their independence.

Sometimes your parents won't admit they need help around the house. Other times they may not realize they need help. Here are five things to look for on your next trip home to help you gauge if your aging parents could use some help.

1. Have your aging parents lost weight?
2. Are your aging parents safe in their home?
3. Are your aging parents taking care of themselves?
4. How are your aging parents' spirits?
5. Are your aging parents having difficulty getting around?



Talk with your parents if you have any concerns about their health and safety. Knowing that you're concerned about their health may be all the motivation your parents need to see their doctor. Some parents may need a little more encouragement, so let them know that you care about them and that you're worried. Consider including other people who care about your parents in the conversation, such as other relatives, close friends or clergy.

To view the entire article, please go to <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/aging-parents/HA00082>

## How to Budget for Binders, Backpacks, and Back-to-School Expenses

With the start of the new school year looming, many parents feel the pressure of affording back-to-school shopping expenses. Clothing, electronics, and school supplies are purchases that can place increased strain on the family budget this time of year.

Just as teachers set curriculums for the school year, parents should create a plan to budget for school supplies and new school clothes. Start by taking a thorough inventory of what your child already has and then develop a budget for the supplies and clothes you still need to purchase. Next, list each item in order of importance, starting with the necessities. After ranking your supplies by priority, trim the non-essentials from the list in order to stay within your budget. Don't forget to plan for frequently overlooked expenses like yearbooks, extra-curricular activities, uniforms, science projects, and immunizations.

**Determine clothing needs vs. wants.** Many kids want to wear the trendy brands and fashion styles that are often the most expensive clothing items stores carry. Set a clothing budget and inform your child of his or her limits before entering a store. Clothing staples that are durable and easy to mix and match with other pieces will stretch your dollars significantly and never go out of style. Avoid purchasing a year's worth of clothing at one time and take advantage of sales and specials that happen throughout the year.

**Save on school supplies.** Shopping in the "back-to-school" section at an expensive retailer may be convenient, but that convenience will cost you. Try shopping at outlet and office supply stores to save money. Many school supplies, such as boxes of tissues and colored pencils, are collected at the beginning of the year and used communally by all the students, so your child will not feel out of place being the only child coloring with the generic brand of markers.

**Involve your children.** While back to school shopping can be a strain financially, the experience offers an opportunity for parents to teach kids valuable lessons about budgeting, credit, and the difference between wants and needs. Remember, the most important strategy for handling the stress of back-to-school shopping is to set a budget and stick to it. With proper planning, you can prepare your children for another school year without breaking the bank.

### About Money Management International

Money Management International (MMI) is a nonprofit, full-service credit-counseling agency, providing confidential financial guidance, financial education, counseling and debt management assistance to consumers since 1958. MMI helps consumers trim their expenses, develop a spending plan and repay debts. Counseling is available by appointment in branch offices and 24/7 by telephone and Internet. Services are available in English or Spanish. To learn more, call 800-762-2271 or visit [www.MoneyManagement.org](http://www.MoneyManagement.org).

Alexis Hamil | Copywriter



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## Matters of the *Heart*: The Enlarged Heart

Recently, a well-known TV pitchman suddenly passed away because of an enlarged heart. As the name suggests, enlarged heart is an increase in the size of the heart. It's detected by physical examination, X-ray or other imaging tests. An enlarged heart may be caused by a thickening of the heart muscle because of increased workload. (This increased workload can be due to heart valve disease or high blood pressure, for example.) This is called hypertrophy (hi-PER'tro-fe), which refers to enlargement of an organ or tissue due to an increase in cell size. While having an enlarged heart may not always be preventable, it's usually treatable. Treatment for enlarged heart is aimed at correcting the underlying cause. Treatment for an enlarged heart can include medications, medical procedures or surgery.

### When to see a doctor

Enlarged heart is easier to treat when it's detected early, so talk to your doctor about any concerns you have about your heart health. Talk to your doctor about steps you can take to reduce your risk. If you think you may have a problem with your heart based on new signs or symptoms you've been having, make an appointment to see your doctor. Seek emergency medical care if you have any of these signs and symptoms, which may mean you're having a heart attack:

- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Fainting



### Symptoms

In some people, an enlarged heart causes no signs or symptoms. Others may have these enlarged heart symptoms:

- Breathing difficulties
- Shortness of breath
- Dizziness
- Abnormal heart rhythm (arrhythmia)
- Swelling (edema)
- Cough



More than 60 million adults in the U.S. have high blood pressure while 7 million have suffered a heart attack, according to data from the faculty of Harvard Medical School. High blood pressure is the result of too much pressure placed on the walls of the arteries as blood pumps through the veins. Over time, this pressure can damage the arteries, heart and kidneys. High blood pressure often doesn't show any symptoms, but can lead to hypertensive heart disease, the leading cause of illness and death from high blood pressure, according to the National Institute of Health. An enlarged heart can occur when increased blood pressure causes the heart to work harder, which results in the thickening of the left ventricle over time.

This enlargement decreases the amount of blood the heart pumps, which can lead to congestive heart failure. Lifestyle changes can be made to treat high blood pressure and prevent heart disease, including weight loss, dietary modifications and abstaining from smoking. Medications such as ACE inhibitors and diuretics are also effective for high blood pressure. In addition, although genetics play a role in determining a person's heart disease risk, there are physical signs that may help identify those at risk, including baldness and having a thick neck. Heart disease is the leading cause of death in America. In fact, every minute someone dies from a heart attack or some other coronary event. Heart disease can go undiagnosed, so it is vital to get checked out by your doctor.

### **Sources:**

- <http://www.aolhealth.com/health>
- <http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=4517>
- <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/enlarged-heart/DS01129>