

Take Charge!



Providing information and ideas for City employees and their families on how to improve health and wellness

OCTOBER 2009

This issue ▶ Avoiding Rollovers ▶ Savings On Rx Drugs ▶ Best Calorie Burners ▶ Singing the Winter Blues ▶ Quiz: Sugar

START Heart Healthy EARLY

By Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAAFP

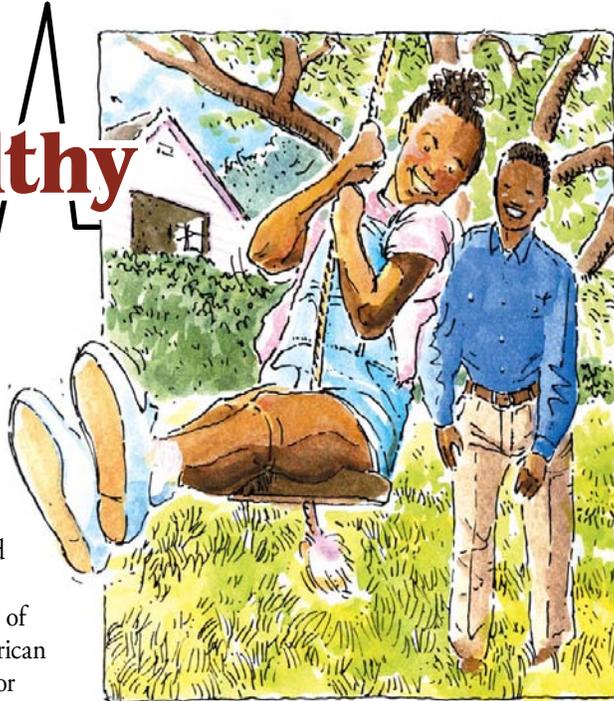
Children's lives have changed a lot in the past 25 years. Compared to previous generations, today's kids spend more time with computers and video games, get less exercise, and consume larger amounts of high-calorie beverages and fast foods.

All of these habits can hasten the onset of heart disease. Research indicates most American teens already have streaks of fat in their major arteries. The streaks can gradually develop into arterial plaque that may block arteries or prematurely trigger heart attacks.

Fortunately, parents can take steps to help prevent early cardiovascular disease from developing in their children. Here's what the American Heart Association recommends for raising heart-healthy kids:

Encourage fun physical activity.

Children need at least 60 minutes of exercise every day, which they can accumulate in 10-minute increments. On 3 days a week, kids need vigorous-intensity exercise. They also need activities that strengthen muscles and bones at least 3 days a week. The remaining activities can consist of moderate-intensity exercise and activities that improve body composition.



Kid-oriented favorites include biking, playing outdoors, skating, soccer and other sports, especially with other kids.

Remember to limit use of TVs, computers, cell phones and video games in the home to less than 2 hours a day; these sedentary activities contribute to weight gain.

Begin life-long healthy eating habits.

Kids benefit from eating fruits and vegetables every day; even if your child is a finicky eater, keep offering a healthful variety. Also essential are whole grains, legumes, lean meats and low-fat dairy products.

Finally, limit processed snack foods that are high in trans fat, saturated fat, sugar, salt and calories. Replace sugary beverages with water and low-fat milk.

Open Enrollment

Benefits Annual Enrollment starts Thursday, October 1. It ends Friday, October 23.

Benefits Fairs:

Wednesday, October 7, 2009

City Hall – Bertha Landes Room
600 4th Avenue, Seattle
9:30 am - 2:30 pm

Tuesday, October 13, 2009

Rainier Community Center
4600 38th Avenue S, Seattle
7:30 am - 10:30 am

Thursday, October 15, 2009

Bitter Lake Community Center
13035 Linden Avenue N, Seattle
7:30 am - 10:30 am

Wellness Events

Puget Sound Heart Walk

October 3

Qwest Field at 9:00 am
www.pugetsoundheartwalk.org

Time Is on My Side

October 8

12 noon - 1:00 pm
Seattle Municipal Tower
Room 1600

Optimizing Your Performance: The Sleep Connection

October 20

12 noon - 1:00 pm
Seattle Municipal Tower
Room 4050/4060

Seasonal Flu Shot Clinics:

Choose from 24 city-wide clinics in October and November at <http://personnelweb/Content/inWeb/benefits/pubs/calendar.pdf>

OCTOBER GOAL

BLOG BLOG BLOG BLOG BLOG BLOG BLOG BLOG

Looking for tobacco-cessation support online? Try "quitting" blogs, which may provide helpful, fresh ideas and success stories.

Avoiding Rollovers

Rollovers are incidents well worth avoiding; they account for nearly 1/3 of all vehicle crash fatalities. Any vehicle can be involved in a rollover. However, narrow vehicles with a higher center of gravity, such as SUVs, are more susceptible.

In addition to vehicle type, the driver, road and environment are important risk factors. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 40% of fatal rollover crashes were caused by excessive speed. More statistics about rollover fatalities to consider:

- 50% involved alcohol.
- 72% were not wearing seatbelts.
- 75% happened in rural areas.
- 90% occurred while attempting routine driving maneuvers, such as going straight or turning. Driver behavior, such as distraction, speeding, or being impaired, contributed.

No matter what you drive, know these 6 precautions from safety experts to reduce your rollover risk:

- 1) Stay in control – avoid alcohol or drug use, excessive speed, and drowsiness.
- 2) If your vehicle edges off the road, don't brake, but reduce speed gradually and ease back onto the road. Panic reduces your ability to stay in control.
- 3) Maintain your vehicle's tires.
- 4) Use caution on rural roads.
- 5) Do not overload your SUV. Excess weight can cause the vehicle to tip.
- 6) Before you buy, do the research using sites such as the NHTSA New Car Assessment Program (www.safercar.gov) for information on rollovers, frontal and side crash test results, and other safety ratings of the vehicles you are interested in.

Additional tip for SUV owners: Before you shift into reverse or back up in your SUV, take a good look. Because of the height of some SUVs, they are prone to back-over incidents, often involving children. Teach children to avoid playing around cars and driveways. Before you back up, step out of your car and check to see if anyone is behind you or ask someone to check for you.



With the high cost of prescription medications, paying less for them is a priority for many Americans. Shop smart with these tips:

Reduce drug co-payments. Ask your provider and pharmacist about generics. Your provider also may be able to refer you to a prescription assistance program. Eligibility requirements vary.

Understand your coverage. Many plans offer 3-tier coverage – try to get a drug from the lowest, or least expensive tier (usually generic).

Try mail order. This option is good for drugs for a chronic condition such as type 2 diabetes or allergies. Do not use mail service for drugs you need immediately or for those that require refrigeration or careful handling.

Buying online? Only purchase medications your health care provider has prescribed in writing. Never buy from a site that does not require a

Memory Busters

There are many conditions created by daily living that contribute to forgetfulness, such as:

Mental overload – If you are overwhelmed with details and tasks, you will probably have memory problems. After all, the more you have to learn and do, the more you have to forget.

Stress – The distraction of feeling stressed and worried can interfere with learning and retention (memory).

Depression and anxiety – Poor mental health can alter brain chemistry in ways that hinder thinking and memory.

Memory Boosters

Don't forget these helpful tips:

Stay mentally active. Engage in activities that tax your concentration and memory, such as crossword

prescription. You can find certified online pharmacies at the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy at www.nabp.net.

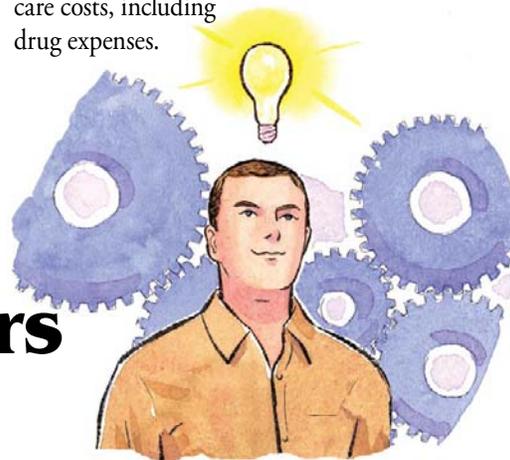
Splitting pills? Get your provider's okay first, because some pills are ineffective if they are split.

Compare prices. Whether they're brick-and-mortar or online, pharmacies vary in prices just like any other retailer.

Taking the right dose? If you've made lifestyle changes, such as exercising more and losing weight, you may be able to quit a medication or use a lower dosage. Note: Never stop taking meds or lower your dosage to save money. Always get your provider's okay first.

Reduce risk. Adverse health effects from improper medication use or taking medications that interact with each other can be costly and threaten your well-being. If you get prescriptions from several providers, give each of them a complete list of what you're taking, including over-the-counter drugs, supplements or herbal products, at every visit.

Bottom line: If you live well and stay well, you can often reduce your dependence on medications. Regular physical activity, a healthy diet, and not smoking can do much to reduce all of your health care costs, including drug expenses.



puzzles, learning new ideas and reading. Take a course in memory improvement.

Learn to be observant and listen well. For example, notice your surroundings when driving to a new location or parking your car; when introduced to a new person, repeat the person's name.

Get organized. Use portable calendars and planners; make lists and follow them, or leave notes where you're sure to see them. Establish fixed places to keep things like keys and glasses.

Slow down! Give yourself time to think and absorb information.

And finally, there's nothing like a quality night's sleep to improve your mind, your memory and your mood.

Best Calorie Burners?

When you're ready, exercise longer, turn up the heat, or both.

If you're like most Americans, you probably struggle to fit exercise into your busy schedule. So when you commit to exercising, you want to get the most from it – burning calories, losing weight and improved fitness.

Fitness experts recommend **aerobic exercise** for all 3 of these goals. Aerobic activities elevate your heart rate through **moderate** or **vigorous intensity** – the difference is based on your fitness level, or what feels comfortable, to avoid strain or injury.

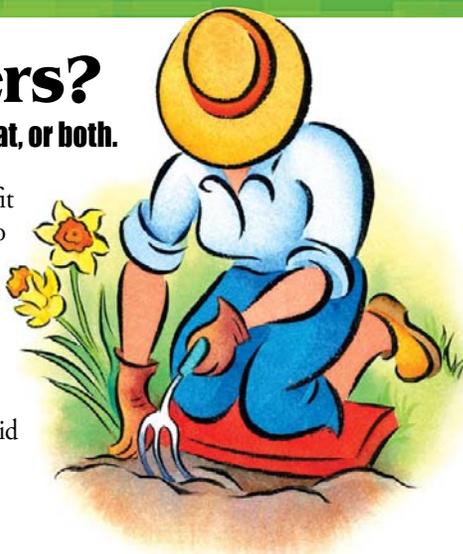
Moderate-intensity aerobic activity will produce a little sweat, but not leave you breathless or unable to converse. Minimum total time: 150 minutes per week. *Examples:* brisk walking, water aerobics, biking and ballroom dancing.

Vigorous-intensity aerobic activity causes rapid breathing and substantially increases heart rate. Minimum total time: 75 minutes per week. *Examples:* jogging, race walking, running, hiking uphill, racquetball or aerobic machine workouts.

Guidelines: If time is short, you can accumulate 30 moderate minutes in 3 10-minute bouts during your day, or 20 vigorous minutes in 2 10-minute bouts. However, longer periods are best for improving cardiac fitness. And to lose weight and keep it off, you need to progress gradually to 60-90 minutes most days of the week.

Like variety? Great – you can combine moderate and vigorous intensity. For example, walk briskly for 30 minutes twice a week and jog or use a treadmill at higher intensity on 2 other days.

The chart provides an estimate of calories burned during various activities for various weights and shows how the length of time and intensity can impact your results. For more activities, visit www.shapeup.org.



Calories burned for time listed below:

	120 lbs	140 lbs	160 lbs	180 lbs	200 lbs
Bicycling, 10 min					
	70	80	90	100	120
Bicycling (stationary), moderate, 30 min					
	180	210	240	270	300
Dancing, 20 min					
	80	80	100	120	120
Gardening, 60 min					
	240	300	360	360	420
Swimming slow crawl, 30 min					
	210	240	270	300	360
Swimming fast, 20 min					
	180	220	260	280	320
Walking 2 mph, 30 min					
	60	60	90	90	90
Walking 4 mph, 60 min					
	240	240	300	360	360

Note: Don't overdo it if you're a beginner. Consult your provider before starting or increasing exercise if you are inactive or have a chronic condition.

Q: Do I need a hearing aid?

By: Elizabeth Smoots, MD, FAAFP

A: Americans live in a world full of noise, so it's no wonder we are losing our hearing more than ever and at earlier ages. While most ear problems occur after age 60, the increasing rate among young people is mainly a result of living in a modern noisy environment. Even children and teens are not exempt from premature hearing loss.

You could have hearing loss if you frequently notice these signs: • sounds seem distorted or muffled • difficulty understanding speech • need for people to repeat themselves • trouble hearing over the phone • difficulty hearing

in a noisy background • raising TV or radio volume so high that others complain.

If you suspect you may have hearing loss, see your provider for an evaluation to rule out correctable causes and to schedule a hearing test if necessary. The good news is that a variety of treatment options, including hearing aids and medical or surgical procedures, are available to help no matter what your age.

October 18-24 is Hearing Aid Awareness Week.

MIND YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Singing the Winter Blues

Do you ever feel so low during winter that you want to hibernate? Are these feelings more pronounced during the winter? For many people, this could indicate symptoms of seasonal affective disorder (SAD).

People with SAD may find they:

- Sleep more, eat more and withdraw from social activities.
- Have anxiety, irritability, headache and cravings for sweet, starchy foods.
- Gain weight due to over eating or lack of physical activity during winter.

SAD is a form of depression linked to decreased daylight during the winter months. Natural daylight is many times brighter than indoor light. If you spend much of your winter indoors exposed only to artificial light, your brain knows the difference – and may trigger mood changes. SAD symptoms recede during spring and summer when days are longer and sunnier.

Scientists believe that SAD may be triggered by abnormal levels of *serotonin* and other neurotransmitters in the brain related to appetite, sleep, mood and body temperature – all of which appear to be disrupted in SAD patients.

If you have symptoms, consult your provider, who will want to rule out other causes of your depression. You may be diagnosed with SAD if you have had 3 consecutive winters of depression followed by a significant remission of symptoms in spring and summer.

SAD Relief

Light therapy, or phototherapy, stimulates the brain to produce neurotransmitters. You sit a few feet away from a special light box for about 45 minutes a day. This light is stronger than ordinary office or household lighting. If light therapy works, your symptoms will improve significantly or disappear altogether.

Daily walking in daylight for 30-60 minutes several days a week may reduce depression. The fresh air, natural light and vigorous motion should boost your energy and mood; it may also help control food cravings that contribute to added pounds in the winter.

Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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Quiz: SUGAR

We Americans love sugar. What's not so sweet is that the average person consumes almost 150 pounds of it annually. Those extra calories contribute to overweight and obesity, so it's important to eat the sweet stuff in moderation. How much do you know about sugar?

- 1 According to federal guidelines, no more than 25% of your total calories should come from added sugars.
 - True False
- 2 Eating too much sugar causes diabetes.
 - True False
- 3 High fructose corn syrup (HFCS), a sweetener made from cornstarch, now accounts for approximately what percentage of calories in the American diet?
 - a. 10% c. 20%
 - b. 15% d. 35%

ANSWERS

1. *True* – For a 2,000-calorie diet, the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend no more than 8 teaspoons, or 32 grams (4 grams = 1 teaspoon) a day. That's equal to ¼ cup of regular pancake syrup and less than one 12-ounce regular soft drink (10 teaspoons/40 grams), says the USDA.

2. *False* – The cause of diabetes is unknown. While eating foods high in sugar does not raise diabetes risk, watch your intake because excess calories from any source can cause weight gain. Overweight and obesity, along with heredity and lack of exercise, increase risk for diabetes.

Open Enrollment

Open Enrollment starts Thursday, October 1 and ends Friday, October 23 at 5 pm.

Review Open Enrollment Guides and Benefits Changes at:

- <http://personnelweb/benefits/library/guides.aspx>
- www.seattle.gov/personnel/resources/benefits_documents.asp

Go to Employee Self-Service at <http://selfservice.ci.seattle.wa.us>:

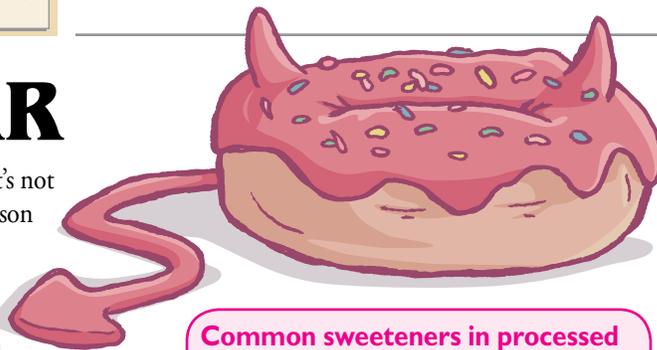
- Reset your password if needed (it expires every 45 days).
- Review and update your current benefit elections.
- (Re)enroll in a health or dependent care Flexible Spending Account.
- Print out a copy of the summary for your records.

Go to **InWeb Benefits Pages** for more information at <http://personnelweb/benefits/home.aspx>.

Verify Dependent's Tax Status: Employees covering children over age 18 on a medical plan in 2010 will receive a request at home to verify dependents' IRS tax status. The City must tax employees on the value of dependent coverage for non-IRS tax dependents.

Make your 2010 benefit changes by Friday, October 23

Note: Briefer Open Enrollment period!



Common sweeteners in processed foods: In addition to corn syrup, other sugars to look for on food labels include brown, white, raw or cane sugar, corn sweetener, corn sugar, dextrose, glucose, and molasses. *Tip:* Fructose occurs naturally in fruit, a much healthier choice for satisfying your sweet tooth.

- 4 The USDA considers which of these to be added sugars?
 - a. high fructose corn syrup
 - b. fruit juice concentrates
 - c. honey
 - d. all of the above

3. *a* – About two-thirds of HFCS is in soft drinks and the rest is added to a wide variety of processed foods. While researchers continue to investigate the role of HFCS in America's obesity epidemic, experts agree this sweetener adds hundreds of empty calories to our diets.

4. *d* – These sugars are added during processing to everything from pasta sauce to canned fruits. The Nutrition Facts Panel gives the amount of total sugars but doesn't list added sugars. Find these in the ingredients list.

Recipe of the Month

Hearty Artichoke Chicken



- 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 3 cups uncooked chicken, chopped (about 1½ lbs)
- 2 14-oz cans artichoke hearts, drained and halved
- 2 4-oz cans sliced mushrooms, drained
- 2 tbsp green olives, sliced
- ¾ cup white wine (or water)
- 2 tbsp white wine vinegar

Paprika to taste

- 1 In large nonstick skillet, heat oil over medium-high temp; add chicken and stir-fry 7-8 minutes.
- 2 Stir in artichoke hearts, mushrooms and olives.
- 3 Add wine and vinegar; reduce heat, cover and simmer 25 minutes.
- 4 Garnish with paprika.

Suggestion: Serve over hot cooked noodles.

Nutrition Facts

Makes 7 cups (5 servings).

Amount Per Serving	Calories	297
	Protein	29.6g
	Total Fat	12.4g
	Carbohydrate	9g
	Fiber	5g
	Sodium	569mg