If the smoke alarm sounds, will your kids wake up?

Rebecca Blocker, MS
Housing & Environmental Design Specialist
BlockerR@missouri.edu

Studies show that a sleeping child will respond more quickly to the mother’s recorded voice than to high-pitched beeps typically found in smoke detectors. A report in the October 2006 issue of PEDIATRICS shows 96 percent of children in one study woke to the mother’s voice alarm, compared with only 58 percent to the tone alarm. The median time to wake up was 20 seconds to an alarm that used the mother’s voice, compared with 3 minutes in the tone alarm group. A study by Victoria University, Melbourne, shows 100 percent of children ages 6 to 15 woke quickly to the sound of their mother’s voice, but only 6 percent responded to traditional high-pitched smoke alarms.

Here are some recommendations to help keep your child safe in case of a fire in your home:

- Place a talking smoke detector inside each child’s bedroom, directed toward the bed. Many models start at under $30. Select models with both recorded and conventional alarms. In some detectors a built-in light activates.
- Create and practice a fire escape plan with two exits from each room and a meeting place outside. Buying an alarm is not enough. To protect children, you need both an alarm that will wake them and an easy-to-follow, well-practiced escape route.
- Practice fire drills with the talking alarm when children are awake and when they are sleeping. If they don’t practice hearing the alarm and (continued on page 4)
Live like your life depends on it

Mary Schroepfer, MED
Nutrition & Health Education Specialist
SchroepferM@missouri.edu

You can improve your health and prevent or lessen effects of chronic diseases through diet and exercise. You can live a long and satisfying life even after being diagnosed with a chronic disease. Your attitude about the diagnosis can impact your ability to fight the disease. Changing behavior leads to a higher quality of life.

Live Like Your Life Depends On It is a statewide health campaign to improve the health of Missouri citizens. Sponsored by Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, University of Missouri Extension and other partners, the campaign’s four main messages are 1) Eat Smart, 2) Move More, 3) Be Tobacco Free and 4) Get Recommended Health Screenings.

The goal is to reduce the risk for chronic disease. A chronic disease is defined as a prolonged course of illness for which a complete cure is rarely achieved, such as diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, or cancer.

Risk factors for multiple chronic diseases include: poor nutrition, lack of physical activity, being overweight, smoking, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, not receiving screenings for chronic diseases, and lack of health insurance.

Here’s a summary of four primary actions you can take to improve your health.

Eat Smart. Choosing the right variety of foods will help maintain a high quality of life and prevent many chronic diseases, such as heart disease, diabetes and some types of cancer.

- Eat 5 to 9 servings of fruits and vegetables every day. Fresh, canned or frozen fruits and vegetables are all good choices.
- When dishing up dinner, fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables.
- Enjoy fruit for dessert.
- Snack on grapes, raisins, bananas, apples, raw carrot sticks, low-fat yogurt and cheeses to get the servings you need.
- Consume at least three servings of whole grains, pastas and rice every day.
- Eat smaller portions. Using smaller plates will help you eat smaller portions.

Move More. Activity can help you maintain a healthy weight. It can lower your blood pressure and cholesterol levels and reduce your risk for heart attack and stroke. It can also help manage diabetes, prevent osteoporosis and ease aches and pains associated with arthritis.

Health experts recommend at least 30 minutes of physical activity most days of the week. Physical activity can be fun at any age. Choose an activity and start today. Begin by dancing, gardening, exercising in water, playing with kids, pedaling in the park, or walking and talking.

Be Tobacco Free. If you’ve smoked for years and think it’s too late to quit, consider this: If you stopped smoking today, your health would begin to improve almost immediately. Here are some tips to help you quit tobacco:

- Set a stop date.
- Have a plan.
- Remove temptation.
- Talk to your doctor or health care provider.

In addition to improving your health, there’s another benefit to quitting smoking: The health of your family and friends will improve when they are no longer exposed to your second-hand smoke.

Get Recommended Health Screenings. Health screenings can’t exactly predict the future, but they can provide information about health issues you might face as you get older.

Screenings can warn you about possible health hazards down the road. Screenings can help you make choices now to prevent health problems later that might impact the quality of your life. Talk to your doctor about the health screenings you need.

Screenings can help you make choices now to prevent health problems later that might impact the quality of your life.

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Ways to help children learn from gardening

Maudie Kelly, MS
Human Development Specialist
KellyME@missouri.edu

Now that spring is upon us, it is only a few short weeks away when we begin to think about summer gardens. I grew up in a home where we had a very large garden that provided lots of fresh vegetables and fruits into the fall. My mother canned and froze many containers of those same fruits and vegetables that we could eat all winter long.

When my children were little, I felt like I did not really have time to do any gardening with them, between work and home responsibilities, but my middle daughter decided she wanted to have a garden when she was about 10 years old. So we picked out a small plot of ground in the backyard, borrowed a tiller to work the soil, decided what we wanted to grow, bought seeds, and planted a garden.

As she watched the different plants grow, my daughter was excited to see the changes even a day could make. She learned about keeping plants watered and pulling weeds. Unfortunately, she also learned that rabbits and other critters also liked her plants. Since we had not fenced our garden, most of it was enjoyed more by the critters than our family! We salvaged some leaf lettuce and a few tomatoes, but that was about all. We did, however, learn lessons about what to do for future gardens.

Because children are naturally curious, they can learn many lessons through gardening and associated activities. What child doesn’t like to play in the dirt, make mud pies, or check out the bugs and worms?

Aside from this, other educational aspects of gardening might include:

- **Science.** Talk about the life cycle of a plant. What does it need to grow? Ask questions about environmental aspects—what will happen if it gets too cold, rains too much or not enough? Which seeds grow faster?

- **Math.** Many math skills can be involved in planting a garden, such as measuring the space, counting seeds, spacing the seeds or plants, or comparing the sizes of seeds.

- **Language & Reading.** Many libraries have books about gardening that parents can read with their children. Look at seed catalogs and let children help choose what to plant. As it gets closer to harvest time, help them look for recipes that might use items they have grown.

Here are other ways children can learn from gardening activities:

- **Making a scrapbook of pictures, drawings, stories, and other artwork can help children tell the story of their efforts at gardening.**

- **Children can gain a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment from caring for something over time.**

- **Children learn patience and responsibility as they learn that plants take time to mature and will do much better if watered and weeded properly.**

- **As part of harvesting products from the garden, children can learn compassion by giving surplus food to a food pantry, shelter, or needy family.**

- **Most importantly, children will enjoy the special family time involved in a gardening project in which their opinions are valued and they are given some choices in deciding what to grow.**
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Waking from sleep, children won’t respond as quickly in an emergency. Most talking detectors have a fire-drill feature to practice your escape plan. According to the U.S. Fire administration, children as young as 3 years old can follow a fire escape plan if they have practiced often.

- **Install smoke alarms on every level of your home, including the basement.** The U.S. Fire Administration recommends installing smoke alarms on every level and both inside and outside sleeping areas. There are two basic types of alarms. Ionization alarms sound more quickly when a flaming, fast-moving fire occurs. Photoelectric alarms are quicker at sensing smoldering, smokey fires. For complete protection, select alarms with both heat and smoke sensors. Integrated wireless systems or hard-wired alarms that are linked together provide extra security because they all sound if there is a fire. Another innovation is a laser beam to point the way to the nearest exit door.

- **Take care of your smoke detectors.**
  - Vacuum the detector’s cover plate. Accumulated dust interferes with the sensors.
  - Replace detectors every 10 years.
  - Test detectors monthly.

_When seconds save lives, practicing escape drills is the key to fire safety._

For more information about residential fire detection, visit the Web at [http://extension.missouri.edu/explore/agguides/agengine/g01907.htm](http://extension.missouri.edu/explore/agguides/agengine/g01907.htm).

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**Live like your life depends on it**

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Recommended screenings for both men and women include: obesity, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, diabetes, colorectal cancer and depression. Additional screenings for women include breast cancer, cervical cancer and osteoporosis. You can make lifestyle choices that will help you live a longer, healthier life. Live like your life depends on it.

For more information visit: [http://lifedependsonit.com](http://lifedependsonit.com)

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By (author's name), (author's title), University of Missouri Extension.

**Editor**

Roxanne T. Miller  
Civic Communications Specialist  
St. Louis County Extension Center  
121 S. Meramec, Suite 501  
St. Louis, MO 63105  
314-615-7607  
E-mail: MillerRT@missouri.edu

**Contributing Writers**

Family Financial Education  
Suzanne Gellman, 636-970-3000  
Sandra McKinnon, 636-583-5141

Housing & Environmental Design  
Rebecca Blocker, 573-756-4539

Human Development  
Maudie Kelly, 573-438-2671  
Teresa Mareschal, 636-970-3000  
Elizabeth Reinsch, 314-615-7605

Nutrition & Health Education  
Cynthia Fauser, 314-615-2911  
Damaris Karanja, 314-615-2911  
Linda Rellergert, 636-970-3000  
Mary Schroepfer, 636-583-5141

Urban Youth & Family  
Rosilee Trotta, 314-615-7637

**Design:** Kathy Maddox

**Web:** extension.missouri.edu/ecregion/lifetimes/

**Subscription Information:**

E-mail version: MaddoxKa@missouri.edu  
Print version: Call 314-615-2911

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