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# Life Times

A bimonthly publication to enhance the quality of life of individuals, families, and communities

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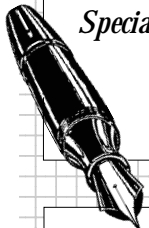
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### Extension's Mission

*University Outreach and Extension serves Missouri by extending research-based knowledge and high-quality educational programs to address the high-priority needs of citizens at the local level.*

## Replace diets with good health habits

**Linda S. Rellergert, MS**  
*Nutrition Specialist*  
 RellergertL@missouri.edu

This is the time of year when many people start diets. But after a few weeks of not getting enough to eat or eating food that doesn't taste good, most dieters give up, having "failed" once again. The truth is, though, that the diets are the failures, not the people who try them.

Instead of improving health, dieting is often harmful and counter-productive. Health statistics show that only 5 to 10 percent of those who diet and are able to lose weight can maintain the loss for more than a short time. Most dieters quickly regain the lost pounds plus a few extra and end up worse than they started.

This year, instead of trying yet another diet, resolve to make a positive change for good health. Any of these suggestions is a good place to start. Focus on taking one step at a time, as changing behavior and attitudes is difficult and takes time.

*People come in a variety of sizes and shapes, and all can benefit from a healthy lifestyle.*



### Adopt normal eating patterns.

Normal eating means regular meals and one or two snacks a day to satisfy physical hunger. Make food choices that provide variety, moderation and balanced nutrition. Respect the body's signals of hunger and fullness. Find non-food ways to deal with stress.



### Make physical activity a part of every day.

Benefits include reduction in blood cholesterol and lipids, lower blood pressure, and relief from stress. Find activities that are fun and enjoyable, and that fit into daily routines. Walking, sledding, skating, dancing, bowling, gardening, or playing with the kids are excellent ways to get physical. Go on to add other activities like weight training, yoga or Tai Chi that build muscles or improve balance and flexibility.

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## Three types of drug interactions

**Drug-food interactions result from medicines reacting with foods or beverages.** Vitamin and mineral supplements can also interact with medicines. Some drugs work best when taken with food, while others should be taken on an empty stomach.

**Drug-condition interactions take place when an existing medical condition makes certain medicines potentially harmful.** For example, people with heart disease, thyroid disease, or diabetes should not take nasal decongestants without first checking with a doctor.

**Drug-drug interactions occur when two or more medicines react with each other.** For example, mixing a sedative and an antihistamine can slow your reactions and make operating machinery dangerous. Drug-drug interactions can result in severe symptoms and may be misdiagnosed as a new illness.

**Medications are playing an increasingly important role in our health care.**

**They are improving health outcomes and quality of life. To make the best use of these medications, know how and when to take your medications, be alert to side effects, and periodically ask your provider if a certain medication is still needed.**

## Prevent drug interactions

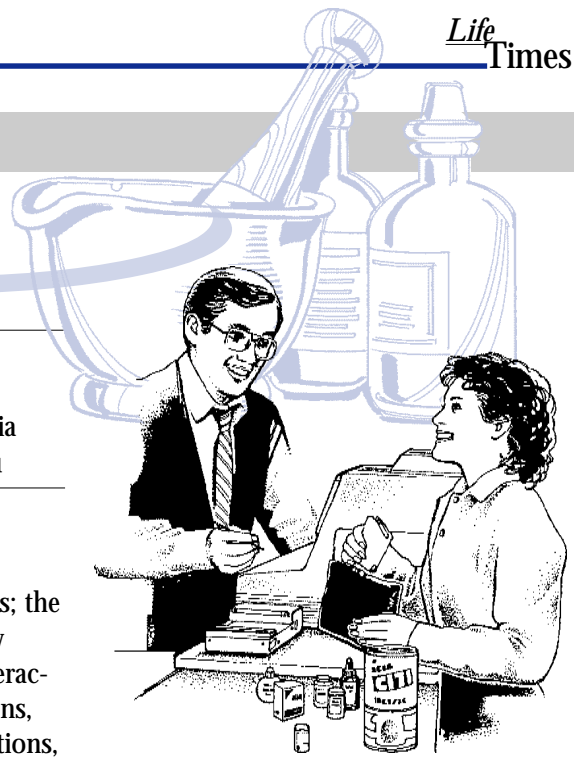
**Gail Carlson, MPH, PhD**  
*Health Education Specialist*  
University of Missouri-Columbia  
CarlsonGa@health.missouri.edu

**D**rug interactions are serious business. Interactions can reduce the effectiveness of drugs; the drugs don't work as well as they should. At other times, drug interactions lead to serious complications, such as drowsiness, slowed reactions, stomach upset, liver damage, dizziness, light-headedness, irregular heartbeat, and a sudden rise in blood pressure.

Pay attention to how your body responds to medicines and be sensitive to side effects. Don't assume these side effects are normal. You can help prevent some interactions by becoming a wiser health consumer.

**Read labels and package inserts carefully.** Pay particular attention to the "Warning" and "Precaution" sections. Review this information each time you get a refill; guidelines for use change as more is learned.

**Brownbag your medications.** You are the only person who knows everything you are taking. The next time you have an appointment with your health care provider, take all your medications with you. Include medications prescribed by other doctors and any over-the-counter drugs. Don't forget any supplements or vitamins you are taking. Don't assume your doctor knows everything you are taking. Make sure you ask your provider about possible interactions.



**Ask your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist to help you work out a daily schedule for taking your medication.** Some interactions may be avoided by taking the medications at different times. Keep a list of your medications in your medicine cabinet and a copy in your wallet or pocketbook.

**Before you take a new medication ask:**

- ? What is the name of this medication?
- Can I take this with other medicines?
- ? Should I avoid certain foods, beverages, or other products?
- What should I look for? What kinds of reactions are possible?
- ? How does this medicine work in the body?
- What other kinds of precautions are necessary?
- ? Is there additional written information that I could read about the medicine?

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## Transition to adulthood: An evolving or revolving door?

Rosilee Trotta, LCSW  
Urban Youth and Family Specialist  
[Trottar@missouri.edu](mailto:Trottar@missouri.edu)

I was listening to a radio discussion the other day in which a psychologist was talking about parent efforts to deal with their children's burgeoning adulthood. One father called in and said that as soon as his second son left for college, he and his wife converted both bedrooms into offices.

"We still have a place where they can sleep when they come home for breaks," said dad, "but we are not encouraging long term stays!"

"Wow," I thought, "that's a tough policy." My own four kids are in varying stages of this adult evolution-ary process. One is completely through the door, another is exiting, and the two in the middle are still revolving. Based upon changing circumstances in their own lives, all have come back to live with us at some point following graduation.

While my husband and I could hardly be described as jubilant at the prospect of extra laundry, dirty cups in the sink, and all that disappearing food, neither have we been angry, upset or moralizing (at least, we've tried to keep the moralizing limited!). Our household has always been one where certainty about the number of plates to set for dinner was never a given.

That's the point, really. All families are not the same. What is under-



stood or expected in one home will not necessarily work in another. Parents understand that, and so do children. If you believe children should become independent at age 18, your children will know and accept that concept long before they become 18. They would be as stressed as you if they stayed beyond that age.

If, however, the door revolves back to their old room in your house, here are a few features that might make the return easier for everyone:

### Understand the reason

Why are they back? Are they in college, graduate school, a training program? Are they saving money to buy a house or a car? Are they looking for a job? Goal pursuit vs. freeloading should make a big difference in how parents accept a child's return to the home. If your children have no goals, help establish some. Independence should be encouraged. An end goal gives everyone involved positive hope!

### Set rules

We parents are generally very good at rule setting. We have to remember, though, that we are no longer dealing with small children. We now have an "almost" adult on our hands. While we may no longer demand that offspring be in by a certain time, it is still okay to know their planned return. State clear expectations for household chores, payment, friends, music or anything else that may lead to conflict. Setting rules together produces a greater chance for success. Respect for each other can even make the reunion fun!



### Assess the situation

Fagin, in the musical *Oliver*, was forever "assessing the situation." Though Fagin's intent was always suspect, his concept of constantly evaluating circumstances in order to make appropriate change is a valid one. Sit down with your child and explore what is and isn't working. Then make the necessary changes. Remember, all changes do not have to begin with the younger family member!

Our children continue to grow and evolve in this complex world, as do we. No matter what our "return policy" is, they will do well if assured of our love and our support.



# Replace diets with good health habits

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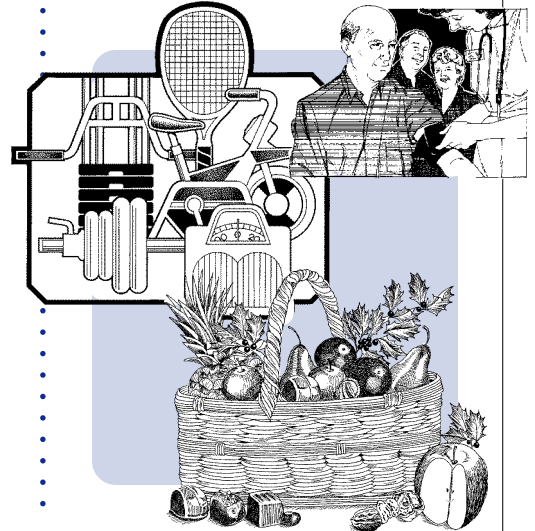
**Get more sleep.** Most of us get less than the eight hours a night recommended by the National Sleep Foundation. This may seem like just a small deficit, but the effects are cumulative. Chronic sleep deprivation contributes to stress and tension, accidents in the home, work place and on the road, and can cause difficulty in coping with everyday annoyances of life.



**Accept that there is no ideal body size, shape or weight.** People come in a variety of sizes and shapes, and all can benefit from a healthy lifestyle.

• Research conducted by Steven Blair, director of research at the Cooper Institute for Aerobics Research in Dallas, shows that people can be both fit and fat. He notes, "There will always be tall, skinny people and short, stocky people. That's out of our control. What we can do is exercise regularly, follow good health practices, and live life to the fullest."

• Each person is responsible for taking care of his or her body. Acceptance and self-respect lead to confidence, wellness and wholeness.



# Prevent drug interactions

(continued from page 2)



**Go to one pharmacy for all your prescriptions.** Good record-keeping can reduce the risk of interactions. Many pharmacies have their records computerized.



**Don't use outdated drugs, drugs that appear to have been tampered with, or drugs given to you for another condition.**



**Know ahead of time what to do if anything goes wrong when taking medicines.** Know whom to contact and how to reach him/her. Keep phone numbers of your doctors on hand next to the telephone and on a card you carry in your wallet or purse.

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**Regional Specialists:**

**Content Editor**

*Linda S. Rellergert*

Linda S. Rellergert  
St. Charles Extension Center  
260 Brown Road  
St. Peters, MO 63376  
636/970-3000  
E-mail: RellergertL@missouri.edu

**Consumer and Family Economics**

Sherron Hancock, 636/797-5391  
Sandra McKinnon, 636/456-3444  
Suzanne Zelman, 636/970-3000

**Environmental Design**

Rebecca Blocker, 573/756-4539  
Sharon Laux, 314/516-5240

**Human Development**

Maudie Kelly, 573/438-2671  
Teresa Mareschal, 636/970-3000  
Betty Reinsch, 314/615-7605

**Nutrition**

Cynthia Fauser, 314/615-2911  
Damaris Karanja, 314/615-2911  
Linda Rellergert, 636/970-3000  
Mary Schroeppfer, 636/583-5141

**Urban Youth & Family**

Rosilee Trotta, 314/615-7637

**Coordinating Editor**

Roxanne T. Miller, 314/615-7607

**Design:** Kathy Maddox

**Web:** outreach.missouri.edu

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