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Life Times

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

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Nutrition Specialist

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Consumer & Family
Economics Specialist

We're on the Web!

This *LifeTimes* newsletter is available on the Web at <http://outreach.missouri.edu/cregion/lifetimes/>

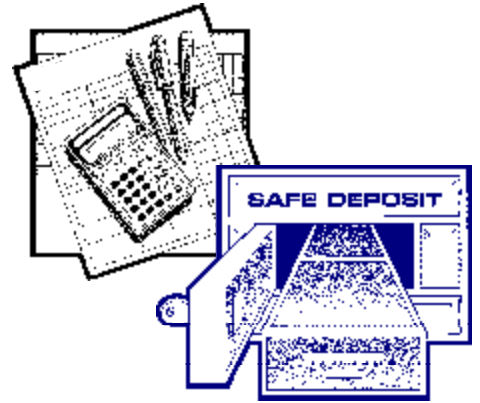


Extension's Mission

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.

Give yourself a legal checkup

Suzanne Zemelman, MS, JD
*Consumer & Family
Economics Specialist*
ZemelmanS@missouri.edu



Now is a good time to review your personal affairs and make sure you are *legally healthy* for 2003. What does it mean to be *legally healthy*? It means reviewing all aspects of your life to ensure that should a crisis occur, you have your affairs in order to reduce the emotional and financial stress on you and/or your family.

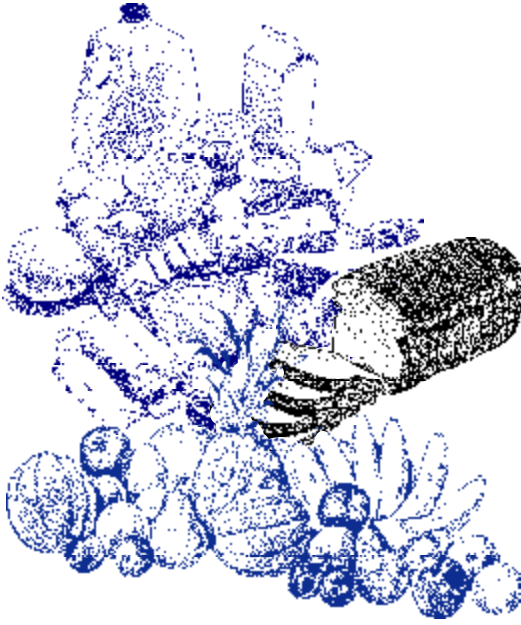
The following questions will help you begin to think about what it takes to be legally healthy. (This is by no means everything you need to consider and should not be substituted for legal advice.)

? Do you have all of your important personal documents in a secure place, such as in a fireproof filing cabinet or safe deposit box? This includes birth certificates of all family members, marriage licenses, divorce decrees, military discharge papers, insurance documents, Wills, etc.

? Do you have basic legal documents, such as a Will or a Trust, that direct what happens to your minor children or your assets should you die? If not, the courts in your state have the power to decide what happens to them. If you already have a Will and/or Trust, when was the last time you reviewed these documents? For example, have you revised your legal documents since any major event, such as marriage, divorce, birth of a child, or death of a spouse?

There are too many unfortunate stories about people who made a Will, but never updated it. For example, a lawyer who died had not changed his Will since the birth of his first child, yet he had three grown children at the time of his death.

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Take stock of what you eat

Mary Schroepfer, MED

Nutrition Specialist

SchroepferM@missouri.edu

When is the last time you thought about what you eat? Eating a wide variety of foods adds important vitamins, minerals, phytochemicals and fiber to your diet to keep your body healthy. Take a look at the following checklist. How are you doing?

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Check your produce.

Follow the 5-A-Day Plan.

Eat a minimum of 5 fruits and vegetables each day. (Active individuals should eat 7 fruits and vegetables daily, according to recommendations on the USDA Food Guide Pyramid.) To reach this goal, eat at least one for breakfast, one for a daytime snack, one for lunch, and two for your evening meal.

Many fruits and vegetables make a quick grab-and-go snack or meal. Whole apples or bananas, bunches of grapes, and mini bags of carrot sticks need no preparation. Raw mushrooms, broccoli, cauliflower, cherry tomatoes, radishes, zucchini sticks and cucumber slices can be prepared and bagged in individual sandwich bags for a quick take-along treat.

Be a food artist. Add a splash of color to every meal.

- **Red:** apples, strawberries, tomatoes
- **Orange:** acorn squash, carrots, sweet potatoes
- **Blue:** blueberries, blue potatoes, plums
- **Green:** spinach, honeydew melon, green bell peppers
- **Yellow:** pears, Golden Delicious apples, Yukon potatoes.

Check your grains.

The Food Guide Pyramid recommends 6 to 11 servings of grain foods every day. Make them whole grains more often for the extra nutrients, fiber and phytochemical advantage they provide over refined products. Whole grains include brown rice, oatmeal, barley, millet and quinoa.

- Look for whole-wheat flour or another whole grain as the first ingredient for breads and whole-grain crackers.
- Use whole-wheat flour for one-third of all-purpose flour when baking cookies, muffins and breads.
- Request whole-grain bread for sandwiches when eating out.

Check your calcium.

Studies show that few of us get the recommended amount of calcium needed to keep bones and teeth healthy and strong. Everyone, regardless of age, needs at least 2 to 3 servings of dairy foods daily. Calcium-fortified foods like orange juice can supply calcium needs, but not the vitamin D, riboflavin and other nutrients found in dairy products.

- Milk is not the only dairy food that provides calcium. Cheese, especially newer low-fat kinds, and yogurt are excellent choices for people who are lactose intolerant.
- Sneak in calcium by adding nonfat dry milk powder to meatloaf and other casseroles.
- Use milk instead of water for mixing up hot cocoa and hot cereals like oatmeal.

Check your portion size.

Food portions sold and served in this country have grown astronomically in recent years. Health experts frequently cite eating too much as one of the root causes of the rising obesity rates.

Check out the portions you serve yourself with measuring cups or some label reading. A serving of French fries, for example, is 10 pieces, while a serving of orange juice is $\frac{3}{4}$ cup.

For a free copy of "More Ways to Size Up Your Servings," send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Serving Size, University Outreach and Extension, 115 West Locust, Union, MO 63084.



For more information about Missouri Saves, call Sandra McKinnon, Sherron Hancock, Suzanne Zemelman, Sharon Laux or Betty Reinsch. (See phone numbers, page 4.)

Build wealth, not debt

Sandra McKinnon, MS

Consumer & Family Economics Specialist

MckinnonS@missouri.edu

About 70 percent of Americans sometimes live “pay-check to paycheck,” and consumer borrowing has reached an all-time high. Personal saving has shrunk in the past 25 years, and many American consumers are in shaky financial positions. Are you?

If so, consider getting involved in a new statewide initiative called **Missouri Saves**, offered through University of Missouri Outreach and Extension. The Missouri Saves program provides financial education, money management skills, and financial coaching. Anyone who agrees to work toward a savings goal—such as homeownership, an emergency fund, school tuition, retirement or even debt repayment—can become a **Missouri Saver**.

Savers will increase savings, decrease debt, and learn to build wealth painlessly, but effectively. Even saving small amounts can add up. For example, by saving 50 cents a day in loose change, you can accumulate \$15 per month that can be added to your savings goal.

The best investment most

borrowers can make is to pay off consumer debt with double-digit interest rates. For example, say you have a \$3,000 credit card balance at 19.8 percent interest. If you pay the required minimum balance of 2 percent of the balance, or \$15—which is greater—it will take 39 years to pay off the loan—and you’ll pay more than \$10,000 in interest!

It’s free to become a Missouri Saver. The only obligation is to develop a specific savings goal and work toward achieving it. When you sign up to participate as a Saver, you will receive a quarterly financial newsletter with savings tips and strategies. In East Central Missouri, extension faculty will be offering seminars, presentations and a home study course on topics like debt management, saving and investing, and planning for retirement.

If you received a brochure about this program in the mail with this newsletter, you can sign up by completing the back panel and mailing it to your local extension center. Or sign up online at <http://www.AmericaSaves.org>.

Missouri Saves is part of the nationwide America Saves initiative. It is managed by the Consumer Federation of America Foundation, supported by the Bank of America Foundation, and advised by dozens of government, business, and non-profit organizations.

Financial in Later Life SECURITY

A Cooperative Extension Initiative

Extension in Missouri is participating in the national initiative called Financial Security in Later Life. You’ll be seeing many programs offered near you about preparing for retirement, getting legal documents in order, improving what you know about long-term care so you can take action before a crisis, and building wealth and reducing debt.

What does Cooperative Extension have to do with your money? Nothing really.

Your money is your business. Our job as educators is to give you the skills, confidence, and motivation to build financial security for you and your family. You’ll get unbiased information you can trust—no sales pitches, no gimmicks. Watch for upcoming workshops, or start online at <http://www.reeusda.gov/financialsecurity>.



Give yourself a legal checkup

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Another example is the man who had remarried and died, leaving his first wife as the beneficiary of his Will and life insurance. (Although Missouri law prevents the ex-wife from inheriting under the Will, she is not prevented from getting the life insurance.)

? Do you have legal documents stating who should make medical decisions for you, should you become incapacitated, or who should handle your financial affairs if you can't? If you have a power of attorney for healthcare and/or financial matters, make sure you check to be certain the people you have listed are still correct. Don't be caught in a situation where the person named in your power of attorney is deceased, an ex-spouse, or a friend or professional who is no longer in your life. Update!

? Do you know how your assets are titled and why this is important? For example, do you own your checking account jointly with a spouse or child? How are your investments or your real estate titled? And what does this mean to your financial security, especially in the case of death or divorce?

? Have you recently reviewed your insurance coverage and beneficiaries named on your life insurance? Have you reviewed the beneficiaries named on other assets, such as IRAs and 401(k)s? Under certain retirement plans, a person's spouse, if there is one, is supposed to be the primary beneficiary of an IRA or 401(k), unless that person signs a waiver. Once again, make sure you update beneficiaries if life has brought any major changes your way.

? Are you receiving, or aware of, all public and private benefits to which you are entitled or will be in the future? Many people are not aware that their husband or wife is vested in a pension plan from a current or prior employer. If a person's spouse dies before the benefit begins, the surviving spouse doesn't know he/she should apply for the income at retirement. Have you checked your Social Security benefits statement for accuracy? Do you know what Social Security benefits you and your spouse are entitled to receive at retirement – even if it is many years away? This is important information for planning your retirement.

This information and more about becoming *legally healthy* will be included in a series of classes offered by University Outreach and Extension in 2003 aimed at helping people achieve financial security in later life.

If you would like to be notified about the classes in East Central Missouri, please call Suzanne Zemelman at 636-970-3000, or e-mail ZemelmanS@missouri.edu.

LifeTimes is written by University Outreach and Extension specialists for individuals and families living in East Central Missouri. This newsletter is provided by your local Outreach and Extension Council. **Articles may be reprinted for educational purposes only. Please credit as follows:** By (author's name), (author's title), University of Missouri Outreach and Extension.

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, 636-583-5141
Suzanne Zemelman, 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 Schroepfer, 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/ecregion

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