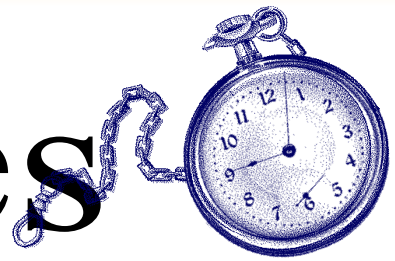


# LifeTimes



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

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## HOME & GARDEN

# Prevent lead poisoning: Get your soil tested

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Horticulturists like to reconnect people with nature. Sadly, urban dwellers often are more at home surrounded by concrete and sheetrock than sod and trees. The more unfamiliar urbanites are with what's outside, the more they tend to fear it. For good reason, nature enthusiasts focus discussion on benefits, and not risks, of spending time outdoors.

A few natural hazards *are* worth avoiding, like poison ivy, ticks, and sunburns. These risks are easily identified and avoided. A more subtle outdoor hazard is *lead in our soil*. (Promise you will use this information about lead to improve--not reduce--time you spend in your back yard!)

Lead is a heavy metal commonly used in paint and gasoline in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Unfortunately, it was not understood until relatively recently that lead has a damaging effect on most of our internal organs and systems. Consequently, soils were exposed to lead through auto emissions and building demolition for many years. Soil lead levels tend to be higher in urban areas.

Children are very sensitive to lead and are usually exposed to it in the home where lead paint is present. They are also exposed when playing in, or consuming



produce from, lead-contaminated soils. If you live in or near urban St. Louis, it's possible your soil contains higher than normal lead levels. *If you are concerned about your children being exposed to lead outdoors, you should have your soil tested.*

University of Missouri Extension provides soil lead testing. The cost is usually \$20 per sample plus a one-time \$50 setup fee. While it may seem expensive, this test is a *total lead digest*, which means results are very reliable. Some labs provide lead testing for as little as \$10, but these are extractable values tests and aren't reliable for making decisions about safety of home garden soils.

*(continued on page 4)*

### **Special offer—Save 50% on lead soil testing!**

Through Oct. 31, 2011: Get lead soil testing done through St. Louis County Extension for \$35 (half off usual \$70 fee). For details, contact the author, visit the Web at [extension.missouri.edu/stlouis](http://extension.missouri.edu/stlouis), or contact your local MU Extension county office.

## FAMILY LIFE

# Where did the time go?

**Maudie Kelly, MS**

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Have you heard the saying, “The hurrier I go, the behinder I get”? I thought about this recently when I spoke to Head Start parents about time management. Sometimes it’s hard to decide if we truly don’t have enough time or have developed bad habits and need to make changes in how we use our time.

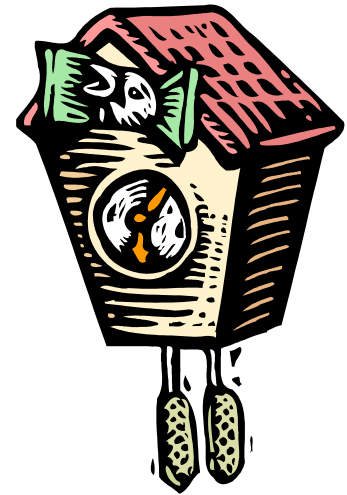
We know that everyone has 24 hours every day. We can’t change how that time goes by, but we can work on ways to use the time we have most effectively.

- **Learn to prioritize.** Decide what is really important in your life. So many things compete for our time and attention, but only *you* can decide how you really want or need to invest your time. Determine daily what needs to be done and in what order. Also allow for the unexpected. Talking to your teenage daughter after a big fight with her best friend may be more important than sweeping the floor.
- **Set yourself as a priority.** Take some time for yourself to be able to direct care and attention to others. It’s not selfish to insist on time to relax and pursue some of your own interests. Your attitude will be more positive because you have invested time in yourself.

- **Learn to say “No.”** It’s not saying the word that is hard, but the feeling of guilt we sometimes have afterward. Try to focus on important things that *will* get done because you declined something that was not a priority.
- **Delegate.** Assign responsibility of a task (not just the work) to someone else. A word of caution here: Don’t be tempted to take over if he/she is not doing it the way you think it should be done. “Done” may need to be “good enough.”

**“The bad news is  
time flies.  
The good news is  
you’re the pilot.”**

- **Try not to procrastinate.** When you know you’re putting a task off, make an appointment with yourself to take the first step toward completing that task. Determine what the first step will be, then set a specific time to begin.
- **Develop systems to keep things running smoothly at home.** Consider a master family calendar with responsibilities for each family member that fits with their time commitments.



- **Downsize your home and office.** Sell/give away/toss things you don’t need.
- **Celebrate!** Reward yourself when a major task is completed. It doesn’t need to be expensive—maybe a bubble bath or two chapters in a new book. Just acknowledge your accomplishments!
- **Pick out your clothes and pack your lunch the night before.**
- **Evaluate your commitments.** This could be for work, school and community activities, hobbies, church, etc. Consider making changes if possible.

I like a quote by Michael Althsuler, “The bad news is time flies. The good news is you’re the pilot.” Remember that!

*Resources:* MU publications GH 6651, *Challenges and Choices: Stress Management—The Challenge of Balance*, and GH 6653, *Challenges and Choices: Time Effectiveness—Prioritizing Your Time*. Available at [extension.missouri.edu](http://extension.missouri.edu).

## PERSONAL FINANCE

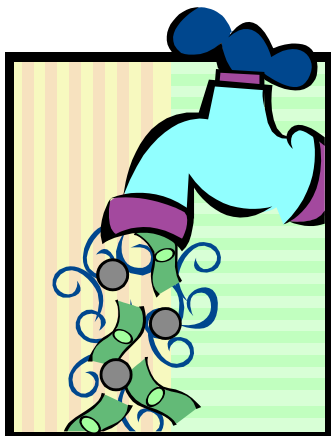
# How to improve financial health

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This summer, many of us may be enjoying a change of pace to our regular routine. Summer often gives us a chance to renew ourselves, giving us a fresh outlook when fall arrives. Often we are more conscious of our physical health in the summer.

In much the same way, we can use summertime to focus more on our financial health to determine where our family money is going and why. As we emerge from one of the deepest recessions in recent history, many of us have a greater appreciation for the value of a dollar. We may realize we can do without some things we thought we needed as we better distinguish between our *needs* and *wants*.

Here are some steps to making powerful positive change in our financial lives by looking at what we're doing right—and what we can improve.



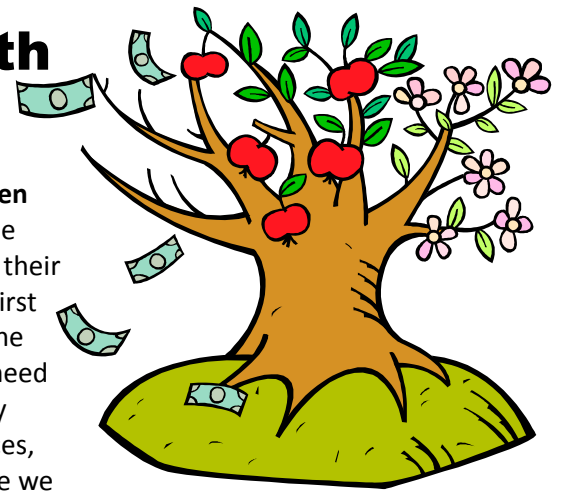
- 1. Gather information, and then write it down!** When people make a decision to improve their physical health, one of the first things they do is to get on the scale. Why? Because they need to know what they currently weigh. Regarding our finances, we also need to know where we stand in our financial lives.

- 2. Determine what you own.** Make a list of assets, like bank accounts and investments, along with other items you own.

**The stress associated with trying to balance work and family goes across all social and economic levels.**

- 3. Write down what you owe and to whom.** This is the starting point, where you are today.
- 4. Keep track of what you make, what you spend, and where you spend it.** More detail is better. This is your current budget. We all have one; it's just informal. An accurate record of what we're doing is a very powerful tool, so keep track!

Now you're armed with the information to make decisions. Your current budget is like your calorie



count. Take a hard look and decide if everything in your spending habits belongs in your long-term plan.

Are you taking on extra debt each month? Is enough going into savings? Do you have a rainy day fund? Do you have a current plan for retirement? From where will the money come?

It's much easier to make these long-term decisions when you're armed with information about what your resources are and how you're using them. These spending decisions, even if it's just a few dollars a day, can have an enormous impact on your long-term wealth and financial security.

Nobody thinks counting calories is fun or exciting. Yet after weeks and months of keeping track, you love the way you look and feel!

The same concept applies to your money. At first it's tough to give up those extras in your budget, but then you see your savings going up, and it feels pretty good! So start keeping track, building wealth, and in the long run, you'll love the way you feel!

# Prevent lead poisoning: Get your soil tested

(continued from page 1)

Some lead is present in all soils. This chart explains different lead levels and the appropriate response to each.

Soil test lead in parts per million (ppm)	Recommendations
Less than 50 ppm	Little or no lead contamination in soil.
50 to 400 ppm	Some lead present from human activities. Grow any vegetable crops. Choose gardening practices that limit dust or soil consumption by children.
400 to 1200 ppm	Do not grow leafy vegetables or root crops. (These crops carry the highest risk of lead contamination.) Choose gardening practices that limit dust or soil consumption by children.
Greater than 1,200 ppm	Not recommended for vegetable gardening. Mulch and plant perennial shrubs, ground cover, or grass. Use clean soil in raised beds or containers for vegetable gardening.

Source: Angima, S.D., & Sullivan, D.M. (March 2008). Evaluating and reducing lead hazard in gardens and landscapes. Oregon State University Extension publication EC 1616-E. <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/pdf/ec/ec1616-e.pdf>

## NUTRITION & HEALTH

# Latest dietary guidelines promote health

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The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans released earlier this year aim to promote health and obesity through improved nutrition and physical activity. The Dietary Guidelines are intended for people 2 years and older, including those at increased risk of chronic disease. Here's a summary of changes to make:

### Balancing calories

- ◆ Enjoy your food, but eat less.
- ◆ Avoid oversized portions.

### Foods to increase

- ◆ Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.
- ◆ Switch to fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk.

### Foods to reduce

- ◆ Compare sodium in foods like soup, bread and frozen meals. Choose the foods with lower numbers.
- ◆ Drink water instead of sugary drinks.

Source: [www.cnpp.usda.gov/dietaryguidelines.htm](http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/dietaryguidelines.htm)

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