



# A Healthy Outlook!

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## HEALTH TIP: Facts About the Thyroid

AS MANY AS 27 MILLION Americans have some type of thyroid disease; about 50 percent are undiagnosed. More than 8 out of 10 patients with thyroid disease are women.

The thyroid is a butterfly-shaped gland in the neck, under the Adam's apple, that has two lobes (right and left) joined by a narrow isthmus. It makes hormones that help control heart rate, blood pressure, body temperature, and weight. The thyroid cannot be seen or felt in most people.

### ♦ Hypothyroidism

Hypothyroidism occurs when the thyroid gland produces too little thyroid hormone. Most cases in the United States are caused by a condition

- ♦ **15 to 20 percent** of people with diabetes are likely to develop thyroid disease.
- ♦ **Approximately 25 percent** of women will develop permanent hypothyroidism; and about 1 out of 50 women in the United States is diagnosed with hypothyroidism during pregnancy.
- ♦ **If left untreated**, thyroid disease can cause elevated cholesterol levels and subsequent heart disease, infertility, muscle weakness, and osteoporosis.

called Hashimoto's thyroiditis, in which a patient's immune system attacks and destroys the thyroid. Hypothyroidism is most often the result of multiple factors, including autoimmune disease.

Common symptoms of hypothyroidism include fatigue, cold, depression, weight gain, constipation, hoarse voice, mood swings, heavy menses, muscle cramps, forgetfulness, dry/coarse hair, and dry/coarse skin.

### ♦ Hyperthyroidism

Hyperthyroidism occurs when the body produces too much thyroid hormone. The most common cause is Graves' disease. Another cause is one or more overactive nodules or lumps in the thyroid.

Common symptoms include weight loss, heat intolerance, changes in vision, sleep disturbances, fatigue,

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## Ask the EAP:

**Q. I am more comfortable speaking Spanish than English. Are there therapists in the area who are fluent in Spanish whom I can talk with?**

**A. Yes.** There are therapists in this area who speak a wide array of languages. Many of these providers will be covered by your insurance. If you need help finding a provider in your plan who speaks your preferred language, the EAP would be glad to assist you in your search. We can be reached at 240-314-1040.

## Facts About the Thyroid

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muscle weakness, frequent bowel movements, menstrual disturbance, hand tremors, and thyroid enlargement.

### ◆ Thyroid Cancer

Thyroid cancer is the most common endocrine cancer and is one of the few cancers that have increased incidence rates over the past several years.

Thyroid cancer is different from many other adult cancers because usually it affects younger people. Nearly two out of three cases occur in those between the ages of 20 and 55; and it occurs about three times more often in women than in men. There are four main types of thyroid cancer: papillary, follicular, medullary, and anaplastic.

Papillary carcinoma accounts for about 8 out of 10 thyroid cancers. Typically, it grows very slowly and develops in only one lobe of the thyroid gland, but sometimes it occurs in both lobes. The five-year survival rate for those who are treated for stages I and II papillary and follicular thyroid cancer is nearly 100 percent.

Many people do not experience symptoms, especially in the early stages of thyroid cancer. As the cancer develops, symptoms can include a lump or nodule in the front of the neck, hoarseness or difficulty speaking, swollen lymph nodes, a pain in the throat or neck, and difficulty swallowing or breathing.

Sources: U.S. National Library of Medicine, American Thyroid Association, HealthDay, American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists, National Cancer Institute, American Cancer Society, and Washington and Shady Grove Adventist Hospitals. The Health Tip of the Week is for educational purposes only. For additional information, consult your physician. Please feel free to copy and distribute this health resource. LifeWork Strategies is an affiliated company of Adventist HealthCare, Shady Grove Adventist Hospital, and Washington Adventist Hospital.

## 6 TIPS for Effective Communication in the Workplace

### 1. *Pause before responding.*

Sometimes just taking a break to think is what you need to really understand what someone else has said or to formulate the thoughts you want to convey.

### 2. *Be trustworthy and honest.*

Communication becomes easier when you are trustworthy and honest. You do not have to worry about saying something wrong or uncovering a secret or a dishonest statement. If you remain open, honest, and worthy of trust, you will have a much easier time communicating with others and others will be a lot more willing to communicate with you.

### 3. *Stay in the moment.*

When you devote your full attention to the person or people with whom you are communicating, you are more likely to have better results. One of the easiest ways for communication to get derailed is to stop paying attention to the person with whom you are communicating. Make sure to stay in the present moment and ignore distractions. Really be there when you are speaking and listening.

### 4. *Pay attention to nonverbal cues.*

This is essential for effective communication. So much of what we want to say is actually not said. If you want to understand the message, you have to do more than just listen. Be aware of the facial expressions you are conveying. Also, avoid crossed arms or legs, which can communicate that you are putting up a barrier.

### 5. *Be patient and open-minded.*

Even the simplest communication can be tough, which is why it is so very important to be both patient and open-minded in your interactions with others. Recognize that you might not necessarily be communicating as effectively as you would like to, and remember also to be patient with yourself. No matter what the situation, there is a way to communicate. Sometimes it just takes more time. Keep your mind open for new ways of sharing and understanding.

### 6. *Follow up after communicating.*

Too often we assume that what we have attempted to communicate was received just the way we intended it. Unfortunately, that often is not the case. Make sure that you follow up after a meeting or important discussion. No matter how obvious your message might seem, it never hurts to follow up with a courteous e-mail to summarize what you talked about and make sure everyone is on the same page.

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“Change your thoughts and you change your world.”

~ BERTHOLD AUERBACH

## OCTOBER 10 is National Depression Screening Day

THE EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM will observe National Depression Screening Day on October 10 from 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. National Depression Screening Day is designed to call attention to the illness of depression on a national level and to educate the public about symptoms and effective treatment; to offer individuals the opportunity to be screened for depression, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress disorder; and to connect those in need with referrals to providers.

Depression screenings are not a comprehensive evaluation, but are a quick and easy way to spot some of the early signs of difficulty. If you are wondering if you may have depression or anxiety, take the first step in asking for help and schedule an appointment for a screening at the EAP. The screenings take only 30 minutes and are available to all MCPS employees and their family members. To make an appointment, call us at 240-314-1040.

## THE UNMET NEEDS of Caregivers of Those Who Suffer from Dementia

By Sasha Scaun, Graduate Intern

CARING FOR SOMEONE suffering from Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia carries with it a multitude of emotions and respon-

care has been called the "silent productivity killer" and it results in an annual loss to U.S. employers of up to \$29 billion (*Working Mother*, 2004).

Caregivers can be found at every level of employment, and they need to have open communication with their supervisors. It is important to know the amount of leave you have available as you plan your caregiving responsibilities. This can help to cut down on miscommunication and misunderstandings with your employer.

The responsibilities of caregiving can be overwhelming. Taking loved ones to doctor's appointments, checking on them if they are home alone or taking measures to ensure that they are not alone, and managing financial issues are just a few of the tasks involved. Often, these responsibilities

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sibilities and impacts one's relationships and career. It is important to be aware and prepared as you undertake this role.

The statistics associated with aging and caregiving are overwhelming. There are currently 40 million Americans age 65 years and older ([www.uscensus.gov](http://www.uscensus.gov)), and those numbers will increase to more than 76 million within the next 20 years (Administration on Aging).

Currently, 44.4 million U.S. adults care for another adult over 65, and 59 percent either work or have worked while doing so (National Alliance for Caregiving, 2004). With the aging population increasing exponentially, the number of, and need for, caregivers certainly will increase as well. Elder

## UNWINDING From Work

AT TIMES, it can be difficult to leave work behind and be ready to face the demands that await you at home. If you find that moving on from your workday is challenging, here are some tips that may help you cope:

- ♦ **Save low-key, low-stress tasks** for the end of your workday so you can start winding down before heading out the door.
- ♦ **If necessary, think about work on your way home.** When you get home, let it go until you are on your way back to work in the morning.
- ♦ **If you are the cook,** plan meals over the weekend, or at least the night before.
- ♦ **If you need some "space"** or recovery time when you first get home, communicate that to your important others. Do not just stomp around and be grumpy.
- ♦ **Learn and practice some stress relievers** like deep breathing, walking, yoga, and visualization. These can help you to calm down during difficult times.

If you find that work problems are spilling over to your personal life, consider calling the EAP at 240-314-1040 for a consultation on how to more effectively manage your work stress.

### Caregiving also impacts one's relationships. Do you hear yourself saying:

*"It's like I am the mother. I'm sure that's typical with other people right? That the roles feel reversed. But it is hard because she's still my mother. I don't want to have to take care of her like that. It doesn't seem right."*

**"I wasn't dealing effectively with my husband at the time."**

*"Well, I don't really have any free time to do anything with friends."*

## The Unmet Needs of Caregivers

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distract caregivers from day-to-day life and from relationships with a spouse, partner, children, and friends. These relationships sometimes are neglected and they tend to suffer.

Taking time for self-care also becomes more challenging. Yet, self-care is critical for ensuring caregiver's physical and emotional well-being, particularly as demands increase over time. So how do caregivers take care of themselves while caring for loved ones? The following are suggestions on ways to achieve a healthy balance:

- ♦ **Ask for help when needed and accept help when offered.**
- ♦ **Exercise regularly.**

- ♦ **Focus on what you have control over.**
- ♦ **Learn about the *Family and Medical Leave Act*.**
- ♦ **Set up a support system.**
- ♦ **Take care of your physical and mental health.**
- ♦ **Take one day at a time.**
- ♦ **Maintain a sense of humor.**
- ♦ **Seek professional help if needed.**

There is no getting around it, caregiving is stressful. However, there are resources available to make the caregiver's job a little easier. **Contact the EAP to learn more or to schedule an appointment to meet with a counselor.**

## National Coalition Against Domestic Abuse

This organization works to eliminate domestic violence and empower battered women and children. Go to <http://www.ncadv.org> to learn more and get tips on making a safety plan, getting help, Internet safety, and news and updates. **You can reach them at 303-839-1852 or by e-mail at [mainoffice@ncadv.org](mailto:mainoffice@ncadv.org)**

### Upcoming Events:

#### DEPRESSION SCREENING DAY

##### ♦ October 10

Free 30-minute depression screening sessions available from 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. at the EAP by appointment. **Call 240-314-1040.** For more information go to: <http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/eap/pdf/Depression%20Flyer%202013.pdf>

#### MCPS CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

##### ♦ October 14, November 11, December 9

Anyone who has or has had cancer or is caring for someone with cancer is welcome to attend. All meetings are from 4–5 p.m., the second Monday of the month at the Carver Educational Services Center, 850 Hungerford Drive, Room 43. **For more information, please contact Debra Tipton on Outlook or call her at 240-314-1040.**

*“We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing.”*

~ GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

## USING THE EAP in Supervision: A Web-based Training

**Did you know that the EAP can be a valuable tool for supervisors?** To learn more about the EAP, how and when to make supervisor referrals, and how to avoid common pitfalls when managing troubled employees, go to **Online Supervisor Training** on the EAP website and walk through our self-paced training for supervisors.

If you have any questions about this program or need a consultation, call us at 240-314-1040.



## A Healthy Outlook!

To help employees with troubling issues before they become overwhelming.



EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE

SPECIALISTS: Debra Tipton  
Robyn Rosenbauer  
Jeff Becker

EAP at CESC

850 Hungerford Drive, Room 43  
Rockville, Maryland 20850  
phone: 240-314-1040  
<http://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/eap>

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You may contact us or send your questions and comments to [Jeffrey\\_Becker@mcpsmd.org](mailto:Jeffrey_Becker@mcpsmd.org)

Please note that e-mail is not necessarily confidential.

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