

Life, Work & Family

Monthly work/life news for UAW-Represented DaimlerChrysler Workers

March 2006

Brought to you by the Circle of Life Committee 1-800-809-4996

In This Issue:

A GOOD NIGHTS SLEEP.....	1
ADVICE FOR NEW MOMS.....	3
AGING AND YOUR EYES.....	4
WHATS NEW – HOMEWORK HELPLINE.....	7



A Good Night's Sleep



"To sleep--perchance to dream," wrote Shakespeare in his masterpiece play, Hamlet. It's a nice concept. However for many men, women and children, the elusive road to slumberland is anything but a dream.

For many, the road is paved with obstacles--often a sleep disorder, ranging from insomnia to restless legs syndrome (RLS) to sleep apnea--where individuals usually snore, experience fitful sleep, and may stop breathing for short periods, in some instances hundreds of times a night. The consequences of sleep deprivation, specifically the "problem sleepiness" during the day that normally follows, can have extremely serious, even life-threatening consequences.

Considering we spend nearly one-third of our lives tucked under the sheets, you would think we would know how to get a good night's rest. Not so for many. If you have sleep difficulties, you're not yawning alone--chances are some of your family members, coworkers and neighbors also have a "sleep debt," the cumulative effect of not getting the quantity or quality of sleep that one needs. As many as forty million Americans are afflicted with more than 70 different types of sleep-related problems.

While some sleep disturbances may be linked to biological changes associated with aging or certain physical diseases, especially those that cause pain, others may be associated with a mental health disorder such as depression or anxiety. Poor sleep may also stem from "bad" habits such as napping too long or too late in the day, or doing shift work, which applies to nearly one quarter of the population, according to the National Center on Sleep Disorders Research. The Center is part of the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, a unit of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). On the other hand, you may simply not be giving yourself the opportunity to acquire ample shuteye. "What we can say with certainty is that there is a pervasive nature of sleep deprivation out there--no question about it. It's part of how our society functions," noted James P. Kiley, Ph.D., Director of the National Center on Sleep Disorders Research.

Why isn't America getting a better night's rest? "It's a two-part problem," the NIH scientist explained. "First, we have a society that's on a 24-hour cycle--with multiple jobs in many cases and multiple responsibilities both at work and home. When you're pushed for time, as many people are, the first thing that usually goes is sleep." However, when you sacrifice hours this way, you frequently end up paying for it in terms of decreased productivity and an increased risk for errors in judgment and accidents, according to Dr. Kiley.

He said that the second part of the problem relates to actual sleep disorders. Insomnia--the inability to fall asleep and remain there--affects many millions of people. "For sleep apnea, easily another 10 to 15 million. Narcolepsy (falling asleep uncontrollably during the day), perhaps 250,000. We don't even know how many people have restless legs syndrome (RLS). In general, society is not well rested, and looking at these numbers and their causes, you begin to see why," Dr. Kiley explained. While people of any age may be affected, there seems to be a large prevalence of sleep disturbances among elderly men and women. Sleep studies reveal that they get less REM (deep) sleep over time. With aging, sleep becomes more fragile, that is, it doesn't take much disturbance to awaken the individual. Women may first notice this during menopause.

Lack of sleep and its link to accidents--automobile and on-the-job--now appears to be a problem of far greater magnitude than previously believed. Fatigue leads to diminished mental alertness and concentration. According to Dr. Kiley, it's the resultant "near miss" (in a motor vehicle or otherwise) that sometimes makes people recognize they have a problem and need to seek professional help. He says there could be as many as 1,500 fatalities and one hundred thousand sleep-related automobile accidents annually in the United States. Shift workers are especially prone to this problem. "Their biological clock is ticking at the wrong time, and they typically drive home after work when they're extremely tired. Young males under 25 also have a disproportionate number of auto accidents related to sleepiness. We want to target them through education; in fact, we're currently working on a program with the U.S. Department of Transportation that we hope will be very effective in this area," said Dr. Kiley.

What about napping? In some countries, a siesta or short daytime rest is a respected, time-honored daily ritual. Dr. Kiley also indicated it may have an important role. "With older people in particular, napping is a good practice. Because their sleep is fragmented and they get less of it at night, they typically make up for it with naps during the day. Napping works, it definitely has a role," he explained, adding that it can increase productivity and help restore your ability to think.

What about waking up too early, like before the birds' first chirp? While such "early morning awakenings" may be a sign of depression or other treatable emotional disorder, the passage of time may be the culprit. "As you age, your biological clock ticks at a slightly different rate. Because of this, you run into people with an advanced sleep syndrome--they go to bed early and then wake up too early," said Dr. Kiley. "Again, sleep is very fragile with age and we really don't know why." In some cases, going to bed a bit later may help reset your biological clock and allow you to sleep later.

How many hours per night should you sleep? NIH sleep experts believe you should be obtaining somewhere in the range of 7 to 8 hours of sleep a night. This figure varies considerably across the age span and from person to person. Still, if you're getting less than 6 hours of sleep per night regularly, chances are you're building up your "sleep debt," and may be compromising your health and welfare, sleep authorities contend.

If you're having chronic sleep difficulties, should you merely lie there and take it? No. Dr. Kiley suggests you practice sensible sleep habits. If you've done all you can and still aren't getting good,

quality sleep, talk with your family doctor. If you need additional help, ask for a referral to a sleep specialist. This may be needed, in particular, for more complex conditions such as narcolepsy. While this disease is not curable, it is treatable, though the regimen with carefully prescribed medications is complicated, and best handled by a sleep specialist. On the other hand, "we've made great strides in the sleep apnea area. General practitioners now do a pretty good job of diagnosing this condition. In the next 5 to 10 years we would like to have every physician as familiar with the other sleep disorders as they now are with apnea," Dr. Kiley concluded.

The Greek philosopher Sophocles once remarked that "sleep is the only medicine that gives ease." As researchers seek to unravel the remaining mysteries surrounding sleep, many more men, women and children should soon find a night in the bed a more pleasant pill to take--rest assured.

Source: Jan Ehrman for National Institutes of Health

Advice for New Moms



The decision you made to have a child is one of the most important and life-changing decisions you will ever make. Babies bring tremendous joy and anticipation, but they do not come with a set of instructions! Parents are suddenly responsible for a new person who is dependent upon them for their every need, yet many of us do not know what those needs will be. What follows are tips to help you adjust to your new role:

Understand that Parenthood is a Transition

You may be overjoyed at the arrival of your child, but it is also likely that you may be afraid, upset, depressed, and yes, exhausted. You might also resent the demands of time and attention that the baby is placing on you. You may feel inadequate about your caregiving skills or fret about your child's pattern of development. Remember: this transition is normal and will take some time to complete.

Be Aware of the Signs of Stress

You cannot eliminate all the stress in your life, but you can manage it. Pay attention to times when you are feeling at the end of your rope. Think of positive ways to de-stress your life, such as sharing household duties. Prioritizing tasks and assigning jobs to others can be a good stress reliever. Besides, you will most likely find that an orderly home is more calming than a disorganized one.

Play

Have fun with your baby. Cuddle and sing and experience the world through her eyes. If your leisure time suffers, you may see that your relationships suffer as well. Show your family that they are important to you by making time to laugh and enjoy each other.

Simplify Your Life

Don't allow yourself to schedule something every minute of every day. Stay home. Don't make a commitment that it is not worthy of your time. Get into the habit of saying "no" and don't feel guilty about it. Let your voicemail or answering machine pick up the phone calls. If it is within your budget, consider hiring help for household duties and other tasks.

Pamper Yourself

Take care of your body. Ask for help from family and friends, if you need it. Eat nutritious meals and exercise on a regular basis. Be sure you get plenty of rest: when the baby naps, you should lie down, too. Make appointments for haircuts, facials and manicures as you would normally do... you can make yourself feel bad if you believe that you don't look good!

Try Not to Procrastinate

If something needs to be done, do it. Get started with the project by beginning with the easiest part and easing into the more difficult part. Work on your project a little every day until it is completed. You will worry about it anyway, so just get it done!

Don't Neglect Your Spouse or Partner

Make time every day to talk and share your feelings and fears. Take advantage of opportunities to just sit and cuddle up with your spouse or partner. Involve them as much as you can in the care and feeding of your baby. Don't wait too long before you leave your baby in the care of a qualified caretaker, so you can have some time alone as a couple. Build up to having "dates" with your spouse or partner on a regular basis.

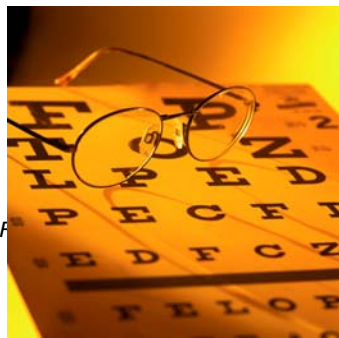
Keep a Sense of Humor

Your life is forever changing and you cannot possibly anticipate all of the challenges that will come your way. Remember that all parents started out like you, with the same dreams and fears and expectations. Children are wonderful and babies turn into "real people" in a flash. Enjoy them (and yourself) as you travel this journey together, and don't take it all too seriously. It is most important that your baby feels secure, nurtured and loved... and you can do that!

Trying to find the balance after the arrival of a child is challenging and takes time. There may be times when you actually question your decision to have children. Even though this may be the most hectic time you have experienced this far, you'll be amazed how fast the time will go. Your baby will be off and exploring this big world before you know it. Cherish this time of your life.

Source: Accor Services North America, Inc. (2004.). So you have a new baby. Retrieved September 27, 2005, from the Accor Services North America database.

Aging and Your Eyes



Did you know that many older people have good eyesight into their 80's and beyond? Growing older does not always mean you see poorly. But age brings changes that can weaken your eyes.

There are some easy things to try when these changes happen. You might add brighter lights in more places around the house--like at work counters, stairways, and favorite reading places. This may help you see better and can sometimes prevent accidents caused by weak eyesight. While older people have more eye problems and eye diseases than younger people, you can prevent or correct many of them by:

Seeing your doctor regularly to check for diseases like diabetes, which could cause eye problems if not treated.

Having a complete eye exam with an eye specialist every 1 to 2 years. Most eye diseases can be treated when they are found early. The eye doctor should enlarge (dilate) your pupils by putting drops in your eyes. This is the only way to find some eye diseases that have no early signs or symptoms. The eye doctor should test your eyesight, your glasses, and your eye muscles. You should also have a test for glaucoma.

Taking extra care if you have diabetes or a family history of eye disease. Have an eye exam through dilated pupils every year. See an eye doctor at once if you have any loss or dimness of eyesight, eye pain, fluids coming from the eye, double vision, redness, or swelling of your eye or eyelid.

Common Eye Complaints

Presbyopia (prez-bee-OH-pee-uh) is a slow loss of ability to see close objects or small print. It is a normal process that happens over a lifetime. You may not notice any change until after the age of 40. People with presbyopia often hold reading materials at arm's length. Some get headaches or "tired" while reading or doing other close work. Presbyopia is often corrected with reading glasses.

Floaters are tiny spots or specks that float across the field of vision. Most people notice them in well-lit rooms or outdoors on a bright day. Floaters often are normal, but sometimes they warn of eye problems such as retinal detachment, especially if they happen with light flashes. If you notice a sudden change in the type or number of spots or flashes, see your eye doctor.

Dry eyes happen when tear glands don't make enough tears or make poor quality tears. Dry tears can be uncomfortable, causing itching, burning, or even some loss of vision. Your eye doctor may suggest using a humidifier in the home or special eye drops ("artificial tears"). Surgery may be needed for more serious cases of dry eyes.

Tearing, or having too many tears, can come from being sensitive to light, wind, or temperature changes. Protecting your eyes (by wearing sunglasses, for instance) sometimes solves the problem. Tearing may also mean that you have a more serious problem, such as an eye infection or a blocked tear duct. Your eye doctor can treat or correct both of these conditions.

Eye Diseases and Disorders Common in Older People

Cataracts are cloudy areas in part or all of the eye lens. The lens is usually clear and lets light through. Cataracts keep light from easily passing through the lens, and this causes loss of eyesight. Cataracts often form slowly and cause no pain, redness, or tearing in the eye. Some stay small and don't change eyesight very much. If a cataract becomes large or thick, it usually can be removed by surgery.

During surgery, the doctor takes off the clouded lens and, in most cases, puts in a clear, plastic lens. Cataract surgery is very safe. It is one of the most common surgeries done in the United States.

Glaucoma results from too much fluid pressure inside the eye. It can lead to vision loss and blindness. The cause of glaucoma is unknown. If treated early, glaucoma often can be controlled and blindness prevented. To find glaucoma, the eye doctor will look at your eyes through dilated pupils. Treatment may be prescription eye drops, oral medications, or surgery. Most people with glaucoma have no early symptoms or pain from increased pressure.

Retinal disorders are a leading cause of blindness in the United States. The retina is a thin lining on the back of the eye. It is made up of cells that get visual images and pass them on to the brain. Retinal disorders include age-related macular degeneration, diabetic retinopathy, and retinal detachment.

Age-related macular degeneration. The macula is part of the eye with millions of cells that are sensitive to light. The macula makes vision possible from the center part of the eye. Over time, age-related macular degeneration can ruin sharp vision needed to see objects clearly and to do common tasks like driving and reading. In some cases, it can be treated with lasers.

Diabetic retinopathy. This disorder can result from diabetes. It happens when small blood vessels stop feeding the retina properly. In the early stages, the blood vessels may leak fluid, which distorts sight. In the later stages, new vessels may grow and send blood into the center of the eye, causing serious vision loss. In most cases, laser treatment can prevent blindness. It is very important that people with diabetes have an eye exam through dilated pupils every year.

Retinal detachment. This happens when the inner and outer layers of the retina become separated. With surgery or laser treatment, doctors often can reattach the retina and bring back all or part of your eyesight.

Conjunctivitis happens when the tissue that lines the eyelids and covers the cornea becomes inflamed. It can cause itching, burning, tearing, or a feeling of something in the eye. Conjunctivitis can be caused by infection or allergies.

Corneal diseases and conditions can cause redness, watery eyes, pain, reduced vision, or a halo effect. The cornea is the clear, dome-shaped "window" at the front of the eye. It helps to focus light that enters the eye. Disease, infection, injury, toxic agents, and other things can damage the cornea. Treatments include changing the eyeglass prescription, eye drops, or surgery.

Corneal transplantation is used to restore eyesight when the cornea has been hurt by injury or disease. An eye surgeon replaces the scarred cornea with a healthy cornea donated from another person. Corneal transplantation is a common treatment that is safe and successful. The doctor may prescribe eyeglasses or contact lenses after surgery.

Eyelid problems can come from different diseases or conditions. The eyelids protect the eye, distribute tears, and limit the amount of light entering the eye. Pain, itching, tearing and sensitivity to light are common eyelid symptoms. Other problems may include drooping eyelids (ptosis), blinking spasms (blepharospasm), or inflamed outer edges of the eyelids near the eyelashes (blepharitis). Eyelid problems often can be treated with medication or surgery.

Temporal arteritis causes the arteries in the temple area of the forehead to become swollen. It can begin with a severe headache, pain when chewing, and tenderness in the temple area. It may be followed in a few weeks by sudden vision loss. Other symptoms can include shaking, weight loss, and low-grade fever. Scientists don't know the cause of temporal arteritis, but they think it may be a

disorder of the immune system. Early treatment with medication can help prevent vision loss in one or both eyes.

Low Vision Aids

Many people with eyesight problems find low vision aids helpful. These are special devices that are stronger than regular eyeglasses. Low vision aids include telescopic glasses, lenses that filter light, and magnifying glasses. Also, there are some useful electronic devices that you can either hold in your hand or put directly on your reading material. People with only partial sight often make surprising improvements using these aids.

Source: National Institute on Aging

What's New – The Homework Helpline

This month the UAW-DaimlerChrysler Family Resource & Referral Program would like to introduce our newest service: **The Homework Helpline!**

The Homework Helpline is a **FREE** benefit that is available to you and your children. This program assists your children with their homework. It's simple to use too! You or your child can be connected to a live teacher in the academic area needed, by simply calling the 1-800 number below.

This service is available to all UAW represented DaimlerChrysler employees and their families. You can access the program Monday – Friday from 4pm to 9pm. Just let the consultant know which topic you need help with, along with your plant name.

**UAW-DaimlerChrysler
Family Resource & Referral Program
Homework Helpline
1-877-500-2345**



Need some help navigating around life's little (and not so little) challenges?

Contact your Family Resource & Referral Program at **1-800-809-4996** and speak with a Care Consultant to receive information to help you balance your work and life issues.