



August 2007

## Cataract Awareness Month

To recognize Cataract Awareness Month in August, we at Federal Occupational Health want to remind you that you don't have to live with cataracts.

A cataract is the clouding of the eye's normally clear lens, blocking the passage of light needed for vision. They form slowly and cause no pain. Some stay small and hardly affect vision, but if the cataract does grow and begins to affect your vision, it can usually be removed with surgery.

Cataracts are a significant cause of blindness in some parts of the world. However, in most cases, vision loss from cataracts is reversible. Technological advances and the availability of new procedures in the United States means that for most Americans, cataracts don't lead to vision loss. Here are some interesting facts about cataracts:

- Cataracts are very common. Approximately 20.5 million Americans age 40 and older have cataracts.
- More than half of all Americans develop cataracts by age 80.

New advances and techniques have made cataract surgery one of the most successful and life-improving surgical procedures. Long gone are the days when cataract removal involved general anesthesia, a long hospital stay and an even longer recovery, and the need for thick glasses afterwards.

So how do you know if you have a cataract?

Some people notice a gradual painless blurring of vision, double vision in one eye or fading or yellowing of colors. Some people may notice sensitivity to glare and/or bright light or trouble driving at night.

Today, cataract surgery is nearly always performed under local anesthesia as an outpatient procedure that takes

less than two hours. In this procedure, the ophthalmologist (eye surgeon) makes a tiny incision through which he or she removes the cloudy lens and replaces it with a permanent artificial lens.

Cataract surgery is the most frequently performed surgical procedure in the United States, with more than 1.6 million procedures performed each year.

- Cataract surgery is usually covered by medical insurance, including Medicare.
- Cataract surgery is usually done as an outpatient procedure under local anesthesia.
- Lasers are not currently used to remove cataracts. But they are sometimes used after cataract surgery to remove a film that can grow on the lens implant.

If you think you may have a cataract, you don't have to live with it. Talk to your eye doctor about your options.

Although it is very safe and effective, cataract surgery is surgery and you need to carefully decide if it is right for you. If cataracts don't affect your quality of life, you may feel that surgery is not needed. The only person who can really decide when it's time to have them removed is you, under the care of your doctor.

Eye health care is provided by the three "O's" – opticians, optometrists and ophthalmologists. It is the ophthalmologist, or Eye M.D., who can treat it all – eye diseases and injuries, and perform eye surgery.

Learn more about eye health at Prevent Blindness America: <http://www.preventblindness.org/> and National Eye Institute, NIH <http://www.nei.nih.gov>.

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## What you should know about Energy Drinks

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Energy drinks have become a popular alternative to carbonated beverages. With names like “Amp,” and “Full Throttle,” these drinks promise to keep you going at full speed.

People drink these beverages to stay awake, combat fatigue on a long drive, or just get through the afternoon doldrums.

But should *you*, be drinking them? Should anybody?

First, energy drinks should not be confused with sport drinks. A sports drink is designed to help replenish fluids, electrolytes, and other nutrients, which can be depleted after working out. They include vitamin waters or the familiar Gatorade.

Energy drinks, on the other hand, are consumed for the boost they provide. The labels usually make claims about “improved performance,” and “increased concentration.” These drinks are basically sugar, water, and high levels of caffeine. And although some make ambiguous health claims, every energy drink is relatively the same.

Energy drinks may contain from 80 to 150 mg of caffeine per serving, about the same as a strong cup of coffee. However, many bottles contain two to three servings, raising the caffeine content to as high as 300 mg per bottle. While caffeine is not generally bad for you, the high levels in these drinks can have varying and unpredictable effects on some people.

For example, high caffeine intake can increase the heart rate and blood pressure (sometimes to the point of palpitations), cause dehydration, and disrupt normal sleep patterns.

And, unlike sports drinks, energy drinks are not recommended for use while exercising, as the combined diuretic effects of the caffeine and fluid loss from sweating can cause severe dehydration.

And what about those health claims?

This has become a topic of controversy. Many drink makers add ingredients to boost sales. If vitamin B, ginseng, or other supplements are added to the recipe, the drinks can seem more healthful.

But are they more healthful? While this is yet to be seen, one thing is certain. They are not allowed to make health claims.

And the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is watching. Earlier this year, the FDA issued a warning to one energy drink manufacturer; because – among other things – they went too far by claiming that the drink lowered cholesterol and reduced anxiety. The FDA doesn't allow makers of dietary supplements to claim to prevent, treat, or cure disease conditions.

It is up to you to decide if you will use energy drinks. And while these drinks are not necessarily bad for you, they shouldn't be seen as similar to protein drinks or as healthful supplements. Also, remember to read the label before buying energy drinks. Beware of false and misleading claims, and double check to be sure that any added ingredients are safe for you.

FDA warning letter:

[http://www.fda.gov/foi/warning\\_letters/b6312d.htm](http://www.fda.gov/foi/warning_letters/b6312d.htm)

“You can't teach a person anything, you can only  
help them find it within themselves.”

- Galileo

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# The Four A's of Coping with Workplace Change

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Change evokes fear in most people because of the uncertainty it presents. People often wonder: "Will I be adequate for this new position? Will I be able to get along with my new boss?"

Major changes, such as new management, downsizing, or reorganizing can result in a feeling of panic.

When you have a routine, you know what to expect. Even if your routine is difficult or boring, it's consistent and reliable. You have learned how to do your work and deal with the people who work with you. But when something changes, suddenly your routine is broken and you no longer know what to expect.

Even if you know that the change is for the better, the transformation can be difficult. For example, when an organization installed a new computerized database, a frustrated employee exclaimed, "I know it will be so much better once I get used to it, but right now the phones are driving me crazy."

It is the same with any kind of change. First, there is a period of adjustment until you regain that feeling of consistency that allows you to build trust and confidence. During this period of adjustment, you may feel disoriented, frustrated, angry, and powerless.

The best time to prepare for any change is when things are running smoothly. That way, you'll have time to plan ahead.

One way to do this is to practice the following *four A's of coping with change*:

## **Awareness**

Since uncertainty about the future creates the most fear and stress during a change, try to find as much information as you can about your situation. Who can you ask? What can you learn? What research can you do? The more you learn, the less uncertainty you'll experience. Behaviors, thoughts, and actions that can be learned and developed will help you cope with change.

## **Acceptance**

You may not like the change, but if you accept the fact that it is the way it is, instead of fighting it or complaining about it, you'll feel less frustrated.

Try to accept transformations with grace and try to be open to a new experience.

## **Attitude**

Are you being fearful or are you thinking about the possibilities for improvement that change might bring? To focus on the positive aspects of your change, write a list of all the possible positive outcomes.

Even though minor changes can cause stress and frustration, the good news is that any change can be an opportunity for something positive to happen. What's more, when you learn how to cope effectively with minor changes at work, you'll develop the skills and positive outlook necessary to help you deal with a major change.

## **Action**

This is where you do have some control over the situation. It's how you prepare and respond to change.

The following positive actions can help you better manage change.

- Develop a network. Always keep in contact with managers and fellow employees from former assignments. Your network will be a valuable resource in times of change.
- Learn new skills. Learn a new computer program. Take a class in communication skills. Learn to make presentations. Ongoing training will add skills to your professional tool kit.
- Control your surroundings. Do what you can to make your work area pleasant and comfortable.
- Ask action questions. With whom can you talk if a situation begins to feel too difficult to cope with? What can you do to know a new boss or coworker? What ideas can you present to your organization that will help with the change?

The key to coping with change is *resilience*. Resilience means knowing how to survive and making the best of change in spite of setbacks, barriers, or limited resources.

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## Group Exercise Classes: What to Expect

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Spinning? Step? Hi/Lo? What does this all mean? It can be tough to decide which kinds of classes are right for you. The following information will give you a description of the most common group fitness formats.

Fitness centers usually offer a range of exercise classes that cater to all levels of fitness with classes categorized by type, level of impact, and kind of conditioning it provides. Also, many centers will indicate whether the class is at the beginner, advanced, or intermediate level.

In a typical group exercise class, a fitness instructor leads a group of participants through a sequence of simple choreographed movements that are not too difficult to learn. The instructor always demonstrates the movements as part of teaching the choreography.

**Impact:** Aerobic exercise can be either high or low impact, or it may be mixed.

- **Low-impact** - This is easier on the joints and bones. This exercise keeps at least one foot on the ground at all times, which translates to no running or jumping.
- **High-impact** - This exercise involves having both feet off the ground sometimes. In other words, jumping or running is involved, which places more stress on bones and joints.
- **Hi/Lo** - This is a class that mixes high and low impact movements.

**Type of Classes:** There are many variations to aerobics offerings.

- **Aerobics** - A class with constant movement using large muscle groups in order to keep up the heart rate for an extended period of time. Many different types of classes may be classified as "aerobic" classes.
- **Step** - Involves stepping up and down on a plastic step. Not advisable for people with knee and joint problems.
- **Toning classes** - Usually concentrates on core muscles (abdominals, buttocks, and back), but there may be some upper body exercises too.

Some of the exercises may be carried out on a mat on the floor.

- **Yoga** - A form of exercise that concentrates on different positions and deep breathing techniques. It can improve your flexibility and posture and relax your body and mind.
- **Pilates** - Helps make the body stronger and more supple and can improve posture.
- **Boxercise** - Uses techniques adapted from martial arts and boxing. Often involves kicking and punching moves.
- **Spinning** - Sometimes called indoor cycling, is an intense group exercise using specialized stationary bicycles.

**Sequence of a Fitness Class:** Fitness classes follow a similar sequence. This helps protect the students from injury.

- **Warm-up** - About five minutes of movement done with low intensity in order to limber the muscles for later use.
- **Stretches** - About five minutes of stretches, intended to lengthen the muscles for later exertion. This follows the warm-up so the muscles will stretch better.
- **Aerobics** - This is the main segment of the class, lasting 35 to 40 minutes. This follows stretches so the muscles are less likely to reach their limits of extension.
- **Cool-down** - About five minutes of movement done with gradually decreasing tempo and intensity. This is better for the circulation than an immediate full stop.
- **Final Stretches** - About five minutes of stretching. This helps avoid muscle tightness after the intensive exercise.

Contact your FOH Wellness/Fitness Center to find out about services available to you. Wellness/Fitness can provide services that fit your needs including walking programs, virtual programs, and personalized services like fitness level testing, body composition assessments, and personal fitness consultations.

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