

Illinois Department of Labor issues Minimum Wage Hike reminder

Minimum Wage Increases to \$11 an hour New Year's Day

Illinois' minimum wage is set to increase to \$11 an hour on Friday, January 1, 2021. The Illinois Department of Labor is encouraging employees to watch their paychecks to ensure that time worked in 2021 is paid at the new rate.

Governor JB Pritzker signed legislation into law in 2019 providing a path to a \$15 minimum wage by 2025. Minimum wage earners

received two increases in 2020 to \$9.25 an hour on January 1 followed by an increase to \$10 an hour on July 1. The minimum wage will continue to increase an additional \$1 an hour each January 1 until it reaches \$15 an hour in 2025.

Prior to the 2020 increases, the last time Illinois increased its minimum wage was more than a decade ago in 2010 when it

was raised to \$8.25. Cook County has a higher minimum wage than the state, currently \$13 an hour. The current city of Chicago minimum wage is \$13.50 an hour for small employers (4 to 20 employees) and \$14 an hour for large employers (21 or more employees).

The new law maintains provisions for employers to count gratuities to offset wages for workers such as

food servers who regularly earn tips. Tipped employees may be paid 60 percent of the hourly minimum wage. These workers must still earn the minimum wage after receiving tips or the employer must make up the difference.

Workers who are under 18 years old and work fewer than 650 hours in a year will earn a minimum wage of \$8.50 per hour beginning

January 1. The youth minimum wage rate will gradually rise to \$13 an hour by 2025.

All Illinois employees are required to post the "Your Rights Under Illinois Employment Laws" in a conspicuous location on the premises of the employer where notices to employees are customarily posted. The color poster, which also covers other Illinois labor

laws, can be found here in English and Spanish: <https://www2.illinois.gov/idol/Employers/Pages/posters.aspx>

Employees with problems regarding the minimum wage can file a complaint with IDOL at the following link: <https://www2.illinois.gov/idol/Pages/Complaints.aspx> or call 312-793-2800.

Strategies to help people overcome seasonal affective disorder

Winter can be an awe-inspiring time of year. Snow-covered landscapes and opportunities to enjoy sports like skiing and snowboarding make winter a favorite time of year for nature enthusiasts and athletes.

As fun as winter can be, many people struggle with the transition from warm weather and long, sunny days to cold weather and reduced hours of sunlight. Sometimes mistaken or misidentified as the "winter blues," this phenomenon is known as seasonal affective disorder, or SAD.

What is seasonal affective disorder?

According to the National Institutes of Mental Health, SAD is a type of depression. The NIH notes that a person must meet full criteria for major depression coinciding with specific seasons for at least two years to be diagnosed with SAD.

The American Psychiatric Association says symptoms of SAD can be distressing and overwhelming and even interfere with daily functioning.

The APA notes that SAD has been linked to a biochemical imbalance in the brain that's prompted by shorter

daylight hours and less sunlight in winter. As the seasons change, a shift in a person's biological internal clock or circadian rhythm can lead to them being out of step with their normal routines. **That can contribute to various symptoms, including:**

- Feeling sad or depressed
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities once enjoyed
- Changes in appetite, usually eating more and craving carbohydrates
- Loss of energy or increased fatigue despite increased sleep hours
- Increase in purposeless

physical activity or slowed movements or speech that may be noticed by others

- Feeling worthless or guilty
- Difficulty thinking, concentrating or making decisions
- Thoughts of death or suicide

Overcoming SAD

The weather can't be changed, but people can speak with their physicians about the following strategies to overcome SAD.

· Light therapy: According to the APA, light therapy involves sitting in front of a light therapy box that emits a

very bright light. In the winter, patients typically sit in front of the box for 20 minutes each morning, and they may see some improvements within one to two weeks of beginning treatment. Light therapy is usually continued throughout the winter.

· Medication: The APA notes that selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, or SSRIs, are a type of antidepressant that are sometimes prescribed to treat SAD.

· Spending time outdoors: People with SAD who don't typically spend much time outdoors when the temperatures dip may no-

tice their symptoms improve if they make a concerted effort to spend time outdoors in winter.

· Rearrange rooms in the home: The APA notes that rearranging rooms and furniture in a home or office to allow more natural light in during the daytime can help improve symptoms of SAD.

SAD is a legitimate concern for millions of people across the globe. Working with a physician to overcome SAD can help people successfully transition to days with fewer hours of sunlight.

Home accidents and how to avoid them with precautionary measures

Some of the most common and dangerous emergency situations occur at home. Precautionary measures can make homes as safe as possible, but accidents can still happen.

The National Safety Council says that 25 million in-home injuries occurred in homes in 2018. Accidental death is the third-leading cause of death in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In fact, the NSC says the home injury death rate increased by 150 percent between 1999 and 2018.

The top five most fatal household injuries in the United States are poisoning, falls, choking or suffocation, drowning, and fires/burns. Recognizing the threat these accidents pose can compel people to make every effort possible to prevent them from happening.

· Poisoning: Poisoning can be attributed to exposure to household chemicals, but illicit drugs and alcohol use, as well as prescription drug overdoses, have become major contributors to accidental poisonings. Keeping medicine and liquor cabinets

locked can prevent children and teens from accessing items that are off limits. Disposing of unused or expired prescription medication can help remove drugs from the home. Educating children about the dangers of drugs and alcohol also may help.

· Falls: Falls can happen at any age but they're most common among the very young or very old. Installing grab bars in bathrooms, improving indoor lighting and removing tripping hazards like area rugs or toys from high traffic areas can reduce the likelihood of falls. Young

children should be carefully supervised and deterred from climbing.

· Choking/suffocation: U.S. News & World Report says airway obstruction - which includes choking, suffocation and strangulation - claims about 1,000 lives a year. Children often put objects in their mouths and swallow them, resulting in choking. Eating too quickly and failing to chew adequately at any age can cause food to become lodged in the throat. Older adults may lose the ability to chew or swallow adequately due to

cognitive disorders or other conditions. Suffocation can occur when children are put in unsafe sleeping environments. Too many blankets or toys can impede youngsters' ability to breathe. Keeping a home clean, monitoring children and seniors while eating and learning the Heimlich maneuver can help prevent injuries.

· Drowning: A young child can drown in just inches of water, but pools, bathtubs and other standing water can be of greatest concern. Install fencing with self-latching gates and supervise children

at all times when they are around water.

· Burns/fires: Install plenty of working smoke alarms and hold fire drills to reduce the risk of fire-related deaths and injuries. Turning down the temperature of a home water heater to avoid scalding and exercising caution in the kitchen, where many fires originate, also is key. Never leave food unattended on the stove.

Home accidents can happen, but awareness of common incidents may compel people to place a greater emphasis on prevention.

The role different vitamins play in our bodies to keep us healthy

A nutritious diet is a vital component of a healthy lifestyle. When it's part of a health regimen that includes routine exercise, a healthy diet that's rich in fruits and vegetables can help people reduce their risk for various illnesses, including chronic diseases like heart disease, cancer and diabetes.

Many adults have known about the value of fruits and vegetables since they were youngsters and their parents repeatedly told them how important it was to eat healthy foods. Despite those early lessons, the Centers for

Disease Control and Prevention reports that less than 10 percent of adults and adolescents eat enough fruits and vegetables. That's unfortunate, as fruits and vegetables are loaded with vitamins that benefit the body in myriad ways.

The U.S. National Library of Medicine notes that vitamin deficiency occurs when people do not get enough of certain vitamins. Recognizing the many functions vitamins serve may compel adults and adolescents to include more fruits and vegetables in their diets.

· Vitamin A: The USNLM notes that vitamin A helps form and maintain healthy teeth, bones, soft tissue, mucous membranes, and skin. According to the World Health Organization, vitamin A deficiency is the leading cause of preventable blindness in children and increases the risk of disease and death from severe infections.

· Vitamin B6: Vitamin B6 helps form red blood cells and maintain brain function. Though the National Institutes of Health notes that isolated vitamin B6 deficiency is uncommon, a deficiency

has been associated with various conditions, including a weakened immune system and dermatitis cheilitis, a condition marked by scaling on the lips and cracks at the corners of the mouth.

· Vitamin C: Vitamin C is an antioxidant that promotes healthy teeth and gums, helps the body absorb iron and maintains healthy tissue. In addition, vitamin C plays an integral role in helping wounds heal. Vitamin C deficiency impairs bone function, and Merck notes that in children that impairment can cause bone lesions and contribute to poor bone growth.

· Vitamin D: The USNLM notes that 10 to 15 min-

utes of sunshine three times per week is enough to produce the body's vitamin D requirement for people at most latitudes. It's hard to rely on food to supply ample vitamin D, which helps the body absorb calcium that is necessary for the development and maintenance of healthy teeth and bones.

· Vitamin E: Vitamin E helps the body form red blood cells and utilize vitamin K. Green, leafy vegetables like spinach and broccoli are good sources of vitamin E. The Office of Dietary Supplements notes that a vitamin E deficiency can cause nerve and muscle damage, potentially leading to

muscle weakness and vision problems.

· Vitamin K: Vitamin K helps to make certain proteins that are needed for blood clotting and the building of bones. The T.H. Chan School of Public Health at Harvard notes that the main type of vitamin K is found in green leafy vegetables like collard greens, kale and spinach. Vitamin K deficiency is rare, but it can lead to bleeding, hemorrhaging or osteoporosis.

Vitamins are crucial to human beings' overall health. Eating ample amounts of fruits and vegetables is a great and delicious way to avoid vitamin deficiency.



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Moultrie County Health Department confirms eighteenth COVID-19 death

Regretfully, the Moultrie County Health Department (MCHD) confirms the passing of another Moultrie County resident, a male in his 80s. To date, 1,232 Moultrie County residents have tested positive for COVID-19, which includes 17 previous COVID-19 related deaths.

"We are saddened by his loss," Moultrie County Health Department Administrator, Angela Hogan, RN, MSPH, said. "We send our condolences to his loved ones."

Hogan continues, "This loss represents the fourth death we have reported in this final week of 2020. As we en-

ter 2021, our health department encourages everyone to continue to take precautions to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our community."

To reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our communities:

- * Watch physical distance and keep six feet from others.
 - * Wear a mask when in public places.
 - * Wash hands routinely.
 - * Stay home if ill.
 - * Protect yourself with the annual flu vaccine.
 - * Become educated on COVID-19 vaccinations and make informed decisions.
- If you are experiencing

symptoms of COVID-19, please get tested. A list of symptoms may be located at

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html?utm_campaign=AC_CRNA

Information on area testing sites can be found online at <https://dph.illinois.gov/testing>.

For more information on the Moultrie County Health Department's news, events and services, please visit www.moultriehealth.org and follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/moultriecountyhealth.

Happy New Year!