

Living Well in Baker County

Dear Extension Friend:

May 2008

Welcome to the month of May. You can always tell that the summer has arrived when you drive by the local gas station and see the price of gas. Unfortunately, I don't think any of us were prepared to see what the prices have jumped up to this year. In this month's Newsletter I have included an article with tips on how to battle those high prices in *Money Matters*. As some of you may know, I teach the SHIP (state housing initia-

tives partnership) education classes for Baker and Bradford counties. Lately I have had several attendees ask questions about mold in the home and have requested information on how to fight it. In the *House & Home* section I have included a piece on mold prevention and control. The *Aging* section discusses the realization of skin problems as we grow older. The article gives tips on how to properly take care of your skin during

the aging process. As always, thank you for reading and if you have any questions feel free to give me a call.

Sincerely,

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Inside this issue:

Money Matters: Battling Gas Prices

With gas prices rising significantly and the economy in the shape it's in, filling up the gas tank can very easily break the bank these days. Unfortunately it doesn't look like there's much relief in sight. The time is now to do what we can to help ease the pain at the gas station. According to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) there are a few tips to help maximize your fuel economy.

Keep your car in good repair—Making sure your tires are inflated to the recommended pressure and replacing a clogged air filter can drastically improve your gas mileage by as much as 13%.

Drive Sensibly—Aggressive driving (speeding and rapid acceleration and breaking) can lower your gas mileage by as much as 33% at highway speeds and 5% around town. According to the DOE each 5 miles per hour (mph) you drive over 60mph can reduce your fuel economy by 10%. Just by slowing down and enjoying the ride you'll save a lot of money and your journey truly won't take that much longer. Just make sure you keep to the right so you won't impede the less-enlightened.

Clean out your vehicle—Not only will it make the ride more enjoyable because you're not moving aside "stuff" to make room, but you'll also be saving on the gas mileage. Take anything unnecessary out of your vehicle

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House & Home: Mold in the Home

It's important to know that mold is part of our natural environment. Outdoors, molds naturally break down dead organic matter such as fallen leaves and dead trees. Mold grows when tiny invisible spores that float through the air land on moist or wet surfaces. These mold spores need 3 things in order to grow: moisture, nutrients and warm temperatures. The best way to prevent mold growth in the home is to control the moisture.

Controlling the Moisture

To control moisture problems in your home, you must find and eliminate the sources of the excess moisture, and you must dry up existing water and moisture. Otherwise, your moisture problems will keep recurring.

Look for the Source of the Problem

Find out where the moisture is coming from. Is your plumbing leaking into walls, ceilings, or floors? Are stopped-up drains causing standing water?

Check washing machine hoses, shower tile grout, and water heaters for leakage. Experts recommend that homeowners check these three areas once a month.

Check for any excessive air leakage. If outside air can flow into your house, outdoor moisture also can flow into your house. Windows, doors, electric outlets, and window air conditioning units all can leak moisture into your home. Leaky windows are easily noticed because water will stream down the window. The windowsill may also be rotten because of the leak. Weatherstripping and caulking may be needed.

Check your air conditioner. Make sure that the filter is not clogged and that the evaporator cooling coils are not iced over. Look for water that may be flowing back into the room (for instance, from the condenser of a room air conditioner).

Remove Moisture Build-Up

Once corrections have been made, a clammy house can best be dried out by heating and cooling by turns.

Turn on the heat. Use a high temperature setting (80°F) so the unit will not cycle off too often. This will draw moisture out of the furnishings.

Then follow with air conditioning. Use a low setting (65°F) so the unit will not cycle off too often. Allow the air conditioning to operate for two or three hours before resetting to normal.

If the moisture level is still not sufficiently reduced, repeat the heating/air conditioning cycle.

Prevent Future Moisture Problems

To minimize the risk of future moisture problems, follow these guidelines when opening windows, using exhaust fans, and using air conditioning.

- Before opening your windows to bring in outside air, check the weather report to find out the predicted dew point or forecasted nighttime low temperature. If this will be 55°F or below, natural ventilation can be used.
- Use exhaust fans for short periods for odor and moisture removal. Remember, though, that during humid weather, outside air may hold more moisture than inside air. Ten minutes of fan operation will remove most of the moisture from the air after bathing or showering.
- During humid weather, run your air conditioning regularly rather than opening windows.
- Use the slowest air conditioner fan speed available on your air conditioner.



Source: Lee and Peart, University of Florida

Money Matters: Gas Prices continued

and don't forget about the trunk. An extra 100 pounds in the vehicle can reduce your MPG by up to 2%. According to the DOE the reduction is based on the percentage of extra weight relative to the vehicle's weight and affects smaller vehicles more than larger ones.

Combine Your Trips— With so many activities going on in our lives today, a lot of travel is required. However, many people make unnecessary trips. How many times have you gone straight home from work and then later gone back out to the grocery store? Try combining your trips together. Go to the grocery store, the bank and the cleaners on your way home from the office. Several short trips from a cold engine start can use twice as much gas as a longer, combined trip to the same places when the engine is warm.

Don't be lazy—While going through the drive-thru may seem convenient at times, sitting there will cost you. Remember that your gas mileage while idling is 0 miles per gallon. Vehicles with larger engines waste more gas at idle than do cars with smaller engines. Next time, park your car and go inside. Chances are you'll make it out faster anyway.



Special Events:



Memorial Day

Monday May 26, 2008

Memorial Day is a [United States federal holiday](#) that is observed on the last Monday of May. It was formerly known as **Decoration Day**. This holiday commemorates U.S. men and women who have died in [military service](#) to their country. It began first to honor [Union](#) soldiers who died during the [American Civil War](#). After [World War I](#), it was expanded to include those who died in any war or military action.



May is American Stroke Month.

The [American Stroke Association](#), a division of the American Heart Association, wants you to take this time to learn your stroke risk factors and recognize the warning signs of stroke. Know these warning signs of stroke and teach them to others.

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause

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Aging: Skin Problems

The skin serves as a protective function by buffering us from the environment. Skin changes leave the older person vulnerable to discomfort and harm. Due to reduced sensitivity, heat sources such as heating pads, hot water bottles, and pot handles can hurt the skin before the elder realizes that damage is occurring.

An older person may develop a greater sensitivity to cool temperatures and drafts. This is caused by a decline in sweat gland activity, a decrease in the ability to maintain a normal body temperature due to poorer circulation, and a thinning of the skin. Wrinkling, drying, and scaling also occur. The skin tears and breaks more easily, increasing the chance of injury and infection.

To cope with these changes, the older person should:

- Avoid extreme exposure to sun and wind, which speed up the aging of the skin.
- Avoid daily baths or showers, as these tend to dry out the skin.
- Moisturize the skin with body oil after a bath, gently patted on with a washcloth.
- After bathing, pat the skin dry.
- Drink one to two quarts of fluid daily to maintain normal body temperature and functioning.



The sensation of touch connects us with others no matter what our age. Thus, touch is important in maintaining the elder's emotional well-being. Use touch to communicate that you are there for support and that you care.

Source: *Smith and Gove, University of Florida*