Vanishing Vision

- As the workforce ages, vision is one of the most obvious casualties. At first, glasses appear, and then multi-focal lenses creep in.
- What other changes should we be aware of in the workplace as everyone ages?
  - Decreased ability to read fine print
  - Altered depth perception and peripheral vision
  - Reduced light transmission (In good light, the eye of a 20 year old receives six times more light than that of an 80 year old. In dark conditions, the 20 year old eye receives about 16 times more light!)
  - Increased sensitivity to glare (wearing contacts or glasses also increases glare sensitivity)
  - Decreased adaptation to the dark
  - Reduction in ability of eyes to tear, creating increased dryness

Happy Hormones?

The aging process plays a lot of tricks on us. Some are on the outside and others play out on the inside. Hormone and immune function are two that occur internally and can pack a punch by impacting our energy and physiological response to our work environment. Here are some of the common age-related changes from the endocrine and immune systems:
- Decreased tolerance to heat or cold
- Decreased inflammatory response
- Increased risk of infections
- Decreased insulin production and decreased thyroid function
- Lower overall work capacity

Are your baby boomers aware of these changes? Do you have a plan to address these changes?

Hard of Hearing

- While each of us aren't sure what impact car stereos, walkman and iPods have had on our hearing over the years, one simple constant is that our hearing does decline as we pass through middle age. Some of the known impacts are:
  - Decreased high-frequency hearing
  - Decreased ability to discriminate some sounds
  - Most often, this change is noticed as the inability to listen to a particular voice or sound in a noisy environment.
  - As well, people who work with a lot of background or noise may have difficulty hearing verbal instructions.

- What does your company do to reduce hearing loss?
- What do you do to minimize further hearing loss?
- Who should you contact if you have questions?

The 'Mighty' Old

- While the average age of your workforce is probably over 50, what age do you think the jobs in your company are designed for? The following are the changes that creep up on us as we age:
  - Decreased muscle mass and strength (After the age of 40, various studies show that you lose between 15 to 46% of your strength)
  - Loss of 1 cm per decade in height after the age of 30 from thinning back discs.
  - Reduced endurance (the older worker has 60-80% less endurance or aerobic capacity than a 20 year old)
  - What are you doing to reduce the risk of injury for the boomers in your workplace?

Are your baby boomers aware of these changes? Do you have a plan to address these changes?
Vanishing Vision

- As the workforce ages, vision is one of the most obvious casualties. At first, glasses appear, and then later multi-focal lenses creep in.
- What other changes should we be aware of in the office as everyone ages?
  - Reduced light transmission (In good light, the eye of a 20 year old receives six times more light than that of an 80 year old. In dark conditions, the 20 year old eye receives about 16 times more light!)
  - Decreased ability to read fine print
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What can we do to reduce the impact of our ever eroding eyesight?
- Use brighter **task specific lighting**
- Reduce/eliminate glare with indirect lighting
- Encourage workers to have their eyes checked regularly and ensure that their eye prescription is up to date.
- Increase font size and icon size on your monitor and use your mouse (Ctrl and scroll wheel OR other customizable controls) to zoom in or out when working on documents with small fonts.
- Try to use documents that are well laid-out and use a good sized font.
Hard of Hearing

The first sign of maturity is the discovery that the volume knob also turns to the left. ~Jerry M. Wright

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  - Decreased high-frequency hearing
  - Decreased ability to discriminate some sounds
  - Most often, this change is noticed as the inability to listen to a particular voice or sound in a noisy environment.
  - As well, people who work with a lot of background or noise may have difficulty hearing verbal instructions.

- What can you do to help yourself?
  - Use hearing protection whenever recommended
  - Reduce background noise
  - Avoid high-frequency noise
  - Set your cell phone on ring and vibrate to avoid missing important calls
  - Use equipment with adjustable noise levels (e.g. phone, headsets)
  - Use visual alarms as back-up for auditory alarms
Boomers Beware! (part 3)

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- Decreased tolerance to heat or cold
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- Lower overall work capacity

- What to do?
  - Take breaks each hour to stand up and stretch your upper body
  - Avoid work in hot or cold environments or ensure that appropriate clothing is available.
  - Where possible, avoid repetitive-motion work and encourage task rotation
  - Take precautions to avoid infection
  - Keep healthy snacks in the office and drink lots of water
The ‘Mighty’ Old

While the average age of your workforce is probably over 50, what age do you think the jobs in your company are designed for? Has anyone ever considered the physical changes in your workforce over the years or does everyone just scratch their head when injuries occur? The following are the changes that creep up on us as we age:

Muscles
- Decreased muscle mass and strength (After the age of 40, various studies show that you lose between 15 to 46% of your strength)
- Reduced bone mass (bone mass decreases up to 30% for females and 15% for males by age 60)
- Loss of 1 cm per decade in height after the age of 30 from thinning back discs.
- Reduced range of motion (ROM) and flexibility
- Reduced endurance (the older worker has 60-80% less endurance or aerobic capacity than a 20 year old)
- Increased recovery time needed for many working tissues
- Increased muscle response time and fatigue
- Older people may find it harder to maintain good posture and balance

What to do?
- Try to keep work in "neutral zone" (between knee and shoulder level, close to the body)
- Continue or begin regular exercise program
- Change positions regularly and stretch the upper body throughout the day
- Allow self paced work and opportunity for breaks
- Design and plan work that eliminates twisting and reduces work with static muscle effort (e.g. sustained positions)
- Seek simple solutions to accommodate physical limitations (there are many resources available)