



## Can you imagine living well to 100 years?

If you could live to 100 or more, would you want to? A common perception held today is that the older you get, the sicker you get. In this scenario, living 100 years or more might not hold much appeal. *But what if that perception is wrong?*

What if becoming older does not necessarily mean becoming sicker? If this were the case, many of us might decide that living 100 years or longer might be all right after all.

As it turns out, getting older and getting sicker do not always go hand in hand. Just ask Dr. Thomas Perls, head of the New England Centenarian Study, the largest study of centenarians in the U.S.

### Navigating the Road to 100

Dr. Perls presented "Navigating the Road to 100," a presentation on some of his study's findings, at the Governor's Annual Conference on Aging on Dec 11, 2008, in Chicago, Illinois.

At the start of his presentation, Dr. Perls recalled his first experiences with trying to visit local centenarians. As he could never find them at home, he assumed they were either in the hospital or frequently at the doctor's

office—since, after all, they were more than 100 years old.

To his surprise, he discovered they were

always out—not because they were ill—but because they were doing things such as teaching piano lessons, custom tailoring clothes, and going on dates with a sweetheart.

### Older = healthier?

These experiences are just a few of many that illustrate a theory the New England Centenarian Study is proving to be true—"the older you get, the healthier you've been."

This might be hard for some to believe. Our society has conditioned many of us to think that old age cannot exist without infirmity. But the study's results are clear: if you have made it to 100, you have most likely delayed the onset of—or avoided completely—diseases normally associated with aging.

### What's a centenarian?

**cen"te·nar'i·an (sen"tə-ner' è-ən):**

*A person who is 100 years of age or older*

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# From the Executive Director

## “The year 2008—a watershed”



Louis W. Kosiba  
IMRF Executive Director

Some years just seem to pass without leaving a clear memory. Other years seem to be remembered by anyone who lived through them. Events in some years dissipate and have apparently little lasting impact. Other years effectively become a “Day One.” People look back at that year and recognize things changed—we turned a corner and things look and feel differently forever.

I think 2008 was such a year: the stock market crash; the deep recession; the freezing up of the financial markets; the bankruptcies of numerous firms; the housing bubble bursting.

### How was IMRF affected?

IMRF is not immune from those events. IMRF investment losses translate into higher employer contribution rates and higher real estate taxes or higher user fees for Illinois citizens.

The IMRF investment portfolio is well-diversified. However, in 2008 there was almost no place to invest our billions without losing money. IMRF lost \$6.1 billion. We went from \$24.2 billion in assets to \$18.1 billion. Most of those losses occurred in September, October and November. Our return was -24.8% for the year. Eventually, we will fill that hole through higher employer contribution rates and positive investment returns.

### What does this mean for you?

What do these events mean to you? First off, any benefit changes like increasing the death benefit from \$3,000 to \$5,000 are unlikely.

Secondly, public pension plans are going to be under intense scrutiny. You will read or hear more and more in the press about the benefits (allegedly overly generous) and about costs to local government.

Thirdly, public pension plans will be on the defensive—just trying to respond to public pressure on the General Assembly to change us.

### Your benefits are safe

If you are retired, there is good news. Your benefits are protected. IMRF has plenty of assets. You will continue to receive your annual 3% increases each January and your 13th payments in July. Nothing will change. None of your benefits are affected by investment returns.

Because your benefits are not affected by investment returns, you can count on your regular monthly payments. And as you spend your pension payments, you continue to contribute to the economy.

In 2008, IMRF paid \$829 million to our retirees who live in Illinois. We estimate those benefit payments added \$773 million to the Illinois GDP and generated \$1.4 billion of additional economic activity.

Your pension payments have a significant ripple effect on our economy: **one retiree’s spending becomes someone else’s income.**

# Will tax withholding changes impact you?

When the Economic Stimulus package changed the federal income tax withholding tables (effective April 1, 2009), it caused a lot of commotion at pension funds, including IMRF.

The stimulus package includes a credit on “earned income.” Many individuals will see a small increase in their paychecks when the new lower federal income tax withholding tables go into effect.

However, the Internal Revenue Service’s (IRS) definition of “earned income” does not include interest, dividend, or pension payments. Therefore, IMRF retirees may not be eligible for this credit although IMRF is required to use the new lower income tax withholding tables.

## How could this affect you?

**If you have federal taxes withheld from your IMRF pension payment using the IRS tax tables**, your federal withholding will be reduced by these new tables. However, you may not be eligible for the new credit unless you are also working while in retirement.

If you are not eligible for the new tax credit and your withholding is reduced by the new tax tables, you may find that you owe money to the

IRS when you file your taxes for 2009. In some cases, you may owe a penalty for not having sufficient income tax withheld or for not making estimated payments during the year.

## What should you do?

If you have federal income tax withheld from your IMRF pension payment, your April 2009 payment stub will reflect the new lower withholding amount. By reviewing this new withholding amount, you and/or your tax advisor can determine if enough taxes will be withheld for your particular situation. (Note: IMRF cannot provide you with tax advice.)

If you determine that you need additional taxes withheld you can:

- Let IMRF know that you want to change your withholding amount. You can do this by sending us a new Form W-4P (available at [www.imrf.org](http://www.imrf.org), by calling us at 1-800-275-4673, or from the IRS at: [www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw4p.pdf](http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fw4p.pdf)).
- Make an estimated payment quarterly to the IRS for the additional amount you feel is necessary to pay the correct taxes during the year.

## 2008 Trustee election results

Last fall, IMRF employers cast their ballots to elect two Executive Trustees to the IMRF Board of Trustees. Election results were certified by the Board at their December 18, 2008, meeting.

DuPage County Treasurer Gwen Henry and Evanston Township High School District 202 Chief Financial Officer William Stafford were

elected to the IMRF Board of Trustees as Executive Trustees. Henry began a two-year term and Stafford began a five-year term on January 1, 2009.

## 2009 Election

In 2009, IMRF members will elect two Employee Trustees—one for a five-year term and one for a one-year term.

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## Who's in the study?

The Boston University School of Medicine's New England Centenarian Study began in 1994. While it began studying all centenarians living within eight towns in the Boston area, the study has grown to include centenarians across the U.S. as well as other countries, and is now the largest comprehensive study of centenarians throughout the world.

## What are the odds you'll live to 100?

Centenarians, said Dr. Perls, are the fastest growing segment of our population—there

are approximately 50,000 in the United States at this time; 85% are women and 15% are men.

And while no one can predict your future, you can “maximize your lifestyle choices to be healthy, and add healthy years to your life,” said Dr. Perls.

Look at the next page to review some healthy aging tips we've written about in previous *Fundamentals* articles.

Currently there are 57 IMRF retirees who are 100 years of age or older—and there's no reason that number can't keep growing! ❖

## So, what's their secret?

While there are still many unanswered questions as to why some people age so well, the New England Centenarian Study is discovering some clues.

There's no doubt that genetics play a factor—at least 50% of centenarians have first-degree relatives and/or grandparents who also achieved very old age.

And while there are no common threads among centenarians as far as years of education, socioeconomic status, religion, ethnicity, or patterns of diet, they do have some characteristics in common, including:

- Few centenarians are obese.

- A substantial smoking history is rare.
- A preliminary study suggests centenarians handle stress better than the majority of people.
- The majority of centenarians (90%) were able to live independently until an average age of 92 years old (75% of this group extended this to 95 years of age). This is important as it demonstrates that even if a centenarian may have experienced an age-related disease process, they were able to delay or prevent disabilities associated with the disease.

We  
turn  
not older  
with years,  
but  
newer  
every day.  
—Emily  
Dickinson

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Article based on the “Navigating the Road to 100” presentation by Dr. Thomas Perls on December 11, 2008, in Chicago, Illinois, and from information on the New England Centenarian Study's website at: [www.bumc.bu.edu/centenarian](http://www.bumc.bu.edu/centenarian)

# Healthy aging tips

Previous *Fundamentals* articles have focused on the topics of healthy aging and how to keep your memory sharp. Taking care of your body and your brain are key contributors to aging in a healthy way. Below are some tips from these previous articles:

- **Take care of yourself physically.**  
Exercise moderately, choose a healthy diet, and get adequate sleep (discuss any exercise or dietary changes with your doctor). Also work toward eliminating behaviors that affect your health negatively, such as smoking or excessive alcohol use.
- **Exercise your brain!**  
Just like any other part of your body, it's important to keep your brain in shape. Challenge your brain with word games, crossword puzzles, and brain teasers. Take a class or learn a new activity to keep your mind active and engaged.
- **Take care of your psychological and emotional health.**  
Work on maintaining a positive attitude, and focus on methods to cope with the stress in your life. Whatever your personal spiritual beliefs are, take care to nurture that area of your life as well.
- **Stay active and involved.**  
Remaining active and involved with others is important to aging in a healthy way. Stay connected with others, such as family and friends, and choose activities that promote interacting with other people in your community.

## Are you thinking about returning to work?

You **MUST** contact IMRF directly before you return to work for an IMRF employer (or for an employer under an Illinois reciprocal system you have retirement service credit with), to **PROTECT YOURSELF FINANCIALLY**.

*Many* factors are involved in determining whether this type of return to work could affect your pension. Do **not** rely on an employer's knowledge of return-to-work rules. Making a misinformed decision could result in **serious financial consequences**. (Even if the employer misinterprets return-to-work rules, **YOU** are responsible for any financial repayments you are required to make to IMRF.)

**Don't put yourself at risk**—call a Member Services Representative at **1-800-275-4673** before you return to work.

# 2009 Retiree Workshop Schedule is here!

<b>Summer 2009</b> <b>Building a Better Memory Workshops</b>		
<b>Tuesday, June 2nd</b> 10:00 A.M. Galesburg, IL	<b>Thursday, June 18th</b> 10:00 A.M. Murphysboro, IL	<b>Thursday, June 25th</b> 10:00 A.M. OR 1:30 P.M. Oak Brook, IL
<b>Thursday, June 4th</b> 10:30 A.M. OR 1:30 P.M. Rockford, IL	<b>Tuesday, June 23rd</b> 10:00 A.M. OR 1:30 P.M. Tinley Park, IL	Your specific workshop location and address will be mailed to you along with your registration confirmation.
<b>Tuesday, June 9th</b> 10:00 A.M. Champaign, IL	<b>Wednesday, June 24th</b> 10:00 A.M. Arlington Heights, IL	

<b>Fall 2009</b> <b>Looking for the Funny Side Workshops</b>		
<b>Tuesday, September 1st</b> 10:00 A.M. Quincy, IL	<b>Wednesday, September 23rd</b> 10:00 A.M. OR 1:30 P.M. Oak Lawn, IL	<b>Tuesday, October 6th</b> 10:00 A.M. Belleville, IL
<b>Thursday, September 3rd</b> 10:00 A.M. OR 1:30 P.M. Libertyville, IL	<b>Thursday, September 24th</b> 10:00 A.M. Champaign, IL	<b>Wednesday, October 7th</b> 10:00 A.M. Marion, IL
<b>Wednesday, September 16th</b> 10:00 A.M. OR 1:30 P.M. Willowbrook, IL	<b>Tuesday, September 29th</b> 10:00 A.M. Utica, IL	Your specific workshop location and address will be mailed to you along with your registration confirmation.
<b>Thursday, September 17th</b> 10:30 A.M. OR 1:30 P.M. Rockford, IL	<b>Thursday, October 1st</b> 10:00 A.M. Moline, IL	

**Workshops are free!**

Workshops are free for IMRF retirees or beneficiaries, and a guest of your choice.

**Registration is easy!**

Registration is required, and you should register as soon as possible—workshops fill up quickly.

# What are the workshops about?

IMRF is once again partnering with the University of Illinois Extension to offer you high quality workshops on topics of interest. There will be two workshop topics offered in 2009:

## Building a Better Memory (Repeat topic)

We've had such positive feedback about this workshop we are offering repeat sessions.

This workshop gives an overview of what memory is, what some typical age-related memory changes are, and offers tips and tricks on how you can improve your memory.

## Looking for the Funny Side (New Topic!)

We are also offering a second workshop topic in 2009. *Looking for the Funny Side* talks about some of the physical and psychological benefits of humor, and how you can use humor to cope with some of the stresses and changes in your life.

## Three easy ways to register!

Use whichever method you prefer to register for one workshop **OR** for both!

- **Online** — Go to [www.imrf.org](http://www.imrf.org) and click on the "Retirees" button at the top of the page, then click on the "2009 Retiree Workshops" link and follow the instructions.
  - **By phone** — Call **1-630-706-4536** to reach Donna Cesario, Field Services Meeting Planner.
  - **By mail** — Fill out the form below and mail it to: Donna Cesario, Field Services Meeting Planner, IMRF, 2211 York Road, Suite 500, Oak Brook, IL 60523-2337. (You can use one form to register for one **or** both workshops.)
- (You can also call 1-800-ASK-IMRF and ask for Donna.)

Check box if registering for: <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Building a Better Memory</b>	Workshop Date:	Workshop Location (city):	Number attending:
Check box if registering for: <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Looking for the Funny Side</b>	Workshop Date:	Workshop Location (city):	Number attending:

IMRF Retiree or Beneficiary Name:

IMRF Retiree or Beneficiary Social Security Number: (last 4 digits only)	Daytime Phone Number:
X X X - X X - _ _ _ _	

Mailing Address:

City:	Zip:
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# 13th Payment coming in July!

The supplemental benefit payment, also known as the "13th Payment," is paid to *eligible* retired members (or to their surviving spouses) every July.

You should receive your 2009 supplemental benefit payment by July 15, after you have received your usual July payment.

## Who is eligible?

You may be eligible if:

- You are a member or surviving spouse eligible for your usual July 1 pension payment, and
- You received an IMRF pension payment each month from July 2008 through June 2009 (this can be a member pension or a

combination of member and surviving spouse pension).

## How is it calculated?

The 13th Payment is paid for entirely by employer contributions.

The total amount of these contributions is divided by the total amount of June benefit payments paid to retirees eligible for the 13th Payment. This results in a percentage of the usual benefit amount.

We *estimate* the amount of your 2009 13th Payment will be approximately 55% of your usual benefit payment amount.

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2009 Retiree Workshops

is published five times a year for retired IMRF members.  
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1-800-ASK-IMRF (1-800-275-4673) IMRF does not endorse any outside agencies mentioned in this newsletter unless specifically stated.  
www.imrf.org

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