
Your Healthy Newsletter from AnnA
Your Weekly Health Prescription - 25 March, 2009

I don't like frightening you, and it isn't even Halloween, but I want to pass on a serious warning about the potentially fatal effects of even a small bump on the head - please read and pass this on. Elsewhere good news for infertile couples, and anyone who has given up eating eggs - get that frying pan out again!

Wishing you the best of good health from AnnA

In this issue:

- NEW HOPE FOR INFERTILITY TREATMENT
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- Capricorn 22 December-20 January
- Natural help to heal scars
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NEW HOPE FOR INFERTILITY TREATMENT

It has just been reported in the Society for Endocrinology journal that the hormone kisspeptin shows promise as a potential new treatment for infertility. Research carried out at Imperial College London, have shown that giving kisspeptin to women with infertility can activate the release of sex hormones which control the menstrual cycle. For women with low sex hormone levels this could be a breakthrough for a new fertility therapy. Kisspeptin sounds like a loving form of antacid, but is actually a product of the KISS-1 gene and a key regulator of reproductive function. If we do not have this then gene, then puberty does not occur and we do not achieve sexual maturity.

The research was primarily concerned with a small group of

ten women whose periods had stopped due to a hormone imbalance and who were injected with either kisspeptin or saline as a control measure. All the women gave blood samples to measure their levels of the two sex hormones essential for ovulation and fertility: luteinising hormone (LH) and follicle stimulating hormone (FSH).

The group who were given the kisspeptin showed to a 48-fold increase in LH and a 16-fold increase in FSH, when compared to the control group who were given only saline. The lead researcher, Dr Waljit Dhillon, said that this discovery offers huge promise as a treatment for infertility as it suggests that kisspeptin treatment could restore reproductive function in women with low sex hormone levels.

WHY A BUMP ON THE HEAD IS NEVER TRIVIAL

I am indebted to Dr Ben Kim for the following information, as it serves as a timely reminder never to shrug off any injury to the head as trivial and to alert you to what to look out for. It has been prompted by the death of the actress Natasha Richardson, on the 18th of March from what initially seemed like a minor bump when on a nursery ski slope in Quebec. She laughed off the incident, felt fine with no symptoms, and refused any medical treatment, but that minor blow to her head had caused internal bleeding which formed a clot (an epidural haematoma) which in turn placed pressure on her brain and within a short period of time caused her death.

Along the sides of your head in the area around your temples, your epidural space houses an artery called your middle meningeal artery, whose job is to provide steady blood supply to your meninges. The portion of skull that protects this area is quite thin and weak compared to the rest of your skull which is why even a low force blow to this area could lead to a fracture and tearing of your middle meningeal artery. If this happens then blood can quickly begin to pool in your epidural space and because your heart would continue to send blood to the area, and this blood wouldn't be drained by your veins, the result is increased pressure on your brain tissues, which could lead to death of brain cells from oxygen deprivation.

What to look out for:

A fall, a casual blow to the head, that may seem unimportant can be fatal and it always pays to be checked out. About 50% of people who experience epidural hematomas briefly lose consciousness, but appear to be just fine when they come to. If pressure in the head continues to build, then over a period of just a few hours, a searing headache tends to develop as increased intracranial pressure causes the dura mater to tear away from the skull. Other signs and symptoms that may develop include:

- * Lethargy
- * Nausea
- * Dizziness
- * Drowsiness
- * Weakness on one side of the body

Vigilance is the only safeguard; you need to be carefully monitored after any blow to the head and be prepared to seek immediate medical help. However fine you feel, don't ignore it.

FRIED EGGS CAN BENEFIT CHOLESTEROL!

You can't entirely blame Edwina Currie, though anyone who writes as badly as she does ought to be blamed for something, but we have steadily been eating fewer and fewer eggs. The dreaded phrase 'high in cholesterol' have sealed their fate, but ironically it now seems that new research shows they could actually reduce a risk factor for heart disease.

We have been warned over and over again about the dangers of eggs producing cholesterol that will clog up your arteries - though as cholesterol is essential to our health and wellbeing it has always been a mixed message.

The main target has been those people who have high blood pressure, and instead of a natural regime of exercise and diet many doctors have been prescribing an Angiotensin-Converting Enzyme (ACE) inhibitor drug. How about a couple of fried eggs instead? Two splendid Canadian researchers at the University of Alberta recently ran lab tests to see whether eating fried eggs or boiled eggs would produce greater amounts of ACE inhibitory peptides and the fried eggs were the winners!

They found that cooked eggs could generate a number of potent

ACE inhibitory peptides and although I am not advocating you have them every day, do not remove them from your diet because of the cholesterol scare but eat in moderation - as you should do with all things in your diet.

Incidentally, the research that led to the egg/cholesterol scare was done on powdered eggs and but the problem has always been cholesterol that has been heated and exposed to air for an extended period. This does not occur with 'real' eggs as the yolk sac insulates the cholesterol from oxidation. Many doctors believe that there is no link between eggs and having high cholesterol levels and in fact if you don't have enough cholesterol from food sources then your body is forced to manufacture it as it is essential for your health. This form of cholesterol that the body produces is more likely to be deposited in blood vessel walls than any form of cholesterol found in eggs.

Egg and chips anyone?

LACK OF VITAMIN D WEAKENS YOUNG GIRLS' MUSCLES

Another reason not to neglect eggs, particularly for teenage girls, is that new research in the USA and Germany has found that having insufficient vitamin D may cause weaker muscles.

A lack of the vitamin causes problems with calcium absorption, and can lead to bone weakness, fractures and osteoporosis as well as increasing the risk of cancer, heart disease and autoimmune disorders. Certainly it is known to impact our muscular and skeletal system and cause weakness, but what's news is that it can also affect muscle power and force. The researchers tested their theory on nearly 100 girls between 12 and 14 at inner city schools and found that overall 75 percent of them had less than ideal levels of vitamin D, but were not showing any symptoms related to deficiency.

The girls were put through a variety of sport exercises, mainly involving jumping, and it was found that there was a direct correlation between vitamin D blood levels and the girls' performance on the muscle strength tests. Recent studies suggest that as many as 55 percent of apparently healthy U.S. adolescents might be vitamin D deficient and so it would be worth making sure that girls include the best sources every day such as oily fish, eggs and fortified

foods like breakfast cereals and powdered milk. Plus that basic, free source good old fashioned sunlight.

HEALTH BITES:

1 ASTROLOGICAL HEALTH PROFILES

Capricorn 22 December - 20 January

This is a fortunate sign to be born under as most Capricorns tend to live to a ripe old age. This could be because they are tenacious, determined, cautious and disciplined, all qualities that when applied to their own health give them a great base. Still, they do have their weak points and need to watch out for:

- * The skeletal structure is a vulnerable area, especially the knees
- * Later in life, rheumatism and arthritis can be a problem
- * Osteoporosis and deposits of calcium on the bones, especially around the joints
- * Stress and tension may show up in your skin as boils, acne and nervous rashes

Sounds like a good preventive programme to protect the bones and joints is in order and make sure the diet has plenty of omega 3 and 6 oils. If there is any history of osteoporosis in the family make sure to have a scan to check it out, and look into using natural progesterone to slow its progress and help build bone. If stress does affect your skin then use only natural products that won't aggravate the problem and try to get to the source of the problem.

2 NATURAL HELP TO HEAL SCARS

As someone who has been naturally careless since childhood, I have obtained a number of small scars, not least from my propensity to iron over my hands instead of the garment and despite the longest oven gloves on the planet I can still manage to burn myself getting things out of the oven, so I have investigated natural remedies for some time. Recently I was talking to a client and the subject came up, and as I passed on what had worked for me I realized it might also be

helpful for you too - so here goes.

Obviously scars will heal and diminish over time, but you can take action by using the following natural remedies to minimize them: Scars generally fade over time but there are also four simple steps you can take to minimise them.

ACE is the combination nutrition supplement you need first, as vitamin A is essential to maintain healthy skin, collagen is vital for your skin and comes from an adequate supply of vitamin C, and to reduce inflammation and reduce your risk of scarring you can't do better than vitamin E. Some people take this as a separate supplement and squeeze the oil out directly onto the skin.

Raw, organic honey - such as Manuka - applied directly to the skin will moisturise and its antibacterial qualities help heal scarring.

If you have an aloe vera plant you can cut the tip of a leaf and smooth the liquid gel directly onto cuts and burns to soothe and minimise scarring.

Herbal help comes from lavender oil and comfrey to promote healing and comfrey to help stop scar tissue forming.

3 HOW YOUR BODY CLOCK AFFECTS HOW YOU AGE

We all have an internal body clock, or circadian rhythm that dictates whether we are an owl or a lark and governs many of our normal functions such as body temperature, brain activity, hormone production and metabolism. These things are well known and we can study our own rhythms to help us balance our lives better so we don't study at a time when our body is not at its mental best, or try to sleep when it is naturally ready to go out and party.

Now it also appears to affect how we age, at least according to new research from Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis who have discovered that our inner biological clock actually communicates directly with the processes that govern aging and metabolism.

As we age, our circadian rhythm declines and the researchers believe that this could be a contributing factor to age-related disorders such as type 2 diabetes and is linked to a gene called

SIRT1 which at the center of a network that regulates aging, coordinates metabolic reactions throughout the body and manages the body's response to nutrition. This biochemical mechanism can directly drive the oscillation of the body's daily clock and is potentially a way to correct metabolic disorders and improve health as people age.

I hope you have found this information useful, but do remember I am not a doctor and cannot give you medical advice, so please always take appropriate action by consulting your own medical advisor if you have concerns about any aspect of your health. Please feel free to pass on any of this information to your friends, or suggest they sign up for the newsletter themselves at my website.

Best wishes for a healthy week - Anna

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Your Healthy Newsletter from Anna
Your Weekly Health Prescription - 18 March, 2009

I have learned never to take anything at face value, particularly medical research and you won't either after reading my disturbing item direct from the US. I have several friends with much-loved, and frustrating, autistic children so anything that might relieve some of the pressure and lead to a more fulfilled life for those children is to be welcomed. Finally, please read the last item about a terrifying unknown and rapid form of breast cancer and pass this warning on to all the women in your life. Wishing you the best of good health from Anna

In this issue:

- THE HIDDEN BENEFITS OF OYSTERS FOR WOMEN
- LIES, DRUG COMPANIES AND 'OFFICIAL' RESEARCH
- AT LAST AN ACCURATE CALORIE COUNTER-EVEN IN YOUR SLEEP!!
- THE HIDDEN BREAST CANCER WOMEN MUST BE AWARE OF

HEALTH BITES:

- Astrological health profiles
- Sagittarius 23 November - 21 December
- Yet another difference between men and women
- Oxygen therapy showing hope for autistic children

THE HIDDEN BENEFITS OF OYSTERS FOR WOMEN

The benefits of oysters as an aphrodisiac are well known, but eating them could actually be a great way of avoiding type 2 diabetes - but only if you are a woman.

There has been a long running data survey running in the USA that has yielded some fascinating results. Over 25 years of medical and nutritional data on over 80,000 nurses has been studied by the Harvard School of Public Health and interesting information on the relationship between zinc in their diet and the chance of developing type 2 diabetes has come to light.

The nurses were all over the age of 33, and when their dietary intake was analysed it was found that there was between an eight to ten percent lower risk of diabetes in women who showed the highest zinc intake. That seems impressive enough, but when they looked at their figures and took other factors into account the figure jumped to a 25 percent lower risk for those with the greatest amount of zinc in their diet.

Oysters of course are a great source of zinc, each one can give you around 40-250mg, plus other essential minerals and omega-3 fatty acids. However you have to eat them raw to get the benefit, and have a healthy bank balance as well. If you are looking for more economical ways of upping your zinc intake then you should include red meat, poultry, beans, nuts, whole grains, cabbage, and dairy products - or buy a decent supplement.

If you are over 50, then you should definitely check your zinc

intake as it declines with age and it is an essential element for a healthy immune system.

LIES, DRUG COMPANIES AND 'OFFICAL' RESEARCH

The health community in the US is reeling from the fact that it has just been revealed that the data used in over twenty pharmaceutical studies published in peer-reviewed medical journals was partially or completely altered-in other words it was faked.

Dr.Scott Reuben was known as a highly-respected and influential clinical researcher, whose findings were accepted in many major medical journals. What has just come to light is that his favourable reviews of many new drugs as being both safe and beneficial are seriously flawed as he has been on the payroll of two major pharmaceutical companies - Pfizer and Merck. He was actually a member of Pfizer's speaker's bureau (which I would have thought was not too difficult to find out) and received five 'independent research grants' from the company as well.

What we tend to look for when evaluating a new piece of research is whether it has been peer reviewed - in other words that scientists of equal substance and standing have read and agreed with the findings. What is now clear is that they are nothing of the sort but have taken their colleagues findings as gospel.

Dr. Scott Reuben didn't just puff off the drugs from the companies he worked for, he actually falsified the data and by having it accepted by leading medical journals got it accepted as genuine. As a faculty member at the respected Tufts Medical School, Reuben had impeccable credentials to bolster his research.

Beginning in 2000, Reuben used his own research to target orthopaedic surgeons and convince them to stop prescribing NSAIDs and switch to the newer, branded COX2 inhibitors produced by Pfizer and Merck. He claimed in his research that using these drugs and others both pre and post operatively would reduce pain and lessen the need for addictive drugs such as morphine. For the last 12 years, he wrote papers promoting pain relieving drugs for orthopaedic surgery that were universally adopted. Now that 'research'

he so assiduously promoted has been shown not only to be completely fabricated but that the drugs he advocated actually may have actually slowed postoperative healing in those patients. This research was taken up world wide and was certainly profitable for both Pfizer and Merck as their profits from these drugs are alleged to run into billions.

He further attempted to boost his credibility by co-authoring papers with respected, established orthopaedic surgeons, one of whom was Evan Ekman, who worked at the Southern Orthopaedic Sports Medicine in Columbia, South Carolina. He asked Ekman to review his manuscript on surgery on the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) in the knee but no orthopaedic surgeon was listed in the study. When Ekman asked for his details Reuben never replied and yet a year later he saw a copy of the manuscript Reuben had originally given him. This had been published in a peer reviewed journal and Ekman was listed as the co-author. He discovered that his signature had been forged by Reuben had on the submission form.

More of Reuben's falsity came to light during a routine audit at Baystate Medical Center in Springfield, Massachusetts which is the western campus for Tufts University School of Medicine. It was discovered that he had not received approval from the hospital's review board to conduct two of his studies and has now been stripped of his research and educational duties and is on 'medical leave'.

You might have thought that a medical researcher who always came out in favour of the pharmaceutical companies might have been a little suspicious - but sadly I am not at all convinced that this sad and sordid story is at all unique.

AT LAST - AN ACCURATE CALORIE COUNTER - EVEN IN YOUR SLEEP!!

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Anyone who has ever tried a calorie counting diet knows what a nightmare it can be - particularly trying to compute the calories you burn through your everyday activities and exercise. Now help is at hand from some bright students at Georgia's Institute of Technology in the USA.

Your gym may have a fancy piece of equipment that will tell you how many calories you are burning as you exercise, but what about walking upstairs or hovering the floor? Well

there is now the 'HappyHR', a device that gives you total fitness monitoring and management - even while you sleep. This personal monitor straps onto your ankle or wrist and collects data continuously on all your activities that are related to your heart rate and exercise. All you have to do then is to upload that information to your PC and then analyse it through web-based software.

The project came through a senior design student who was a keen runner and wanted a really accurate reading of his calorie output during the day. Most monitors on the market are either very cheap and simple pedometers, or expensive health monitors and he is looking to develop this for sale at around \$100 and aimed at the growing health and fitness market.

He co opted other students in electrical engineering, biomedical engineering and industrial design to bring his concept to fruition. It's a simple, subtle device that is smaller than an MP3 player and is due on the market in the autumn. Any British students out there working on innovative health projects? If so, let's hear from you.

THE HIDDEN BREAST CANCER WOMEN MUST BE AWARE OF

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This warning came to me this week from one of my health groups, and I think it is important that we pass on this information to as many women as possible. There is a rare form of breast cancer called inflammatory breast cancer (IBC) and although it accounts for less than three per cent of all breast cancers it has a much lower survival rate. Typical breast cancer survival over five years is now almost 90 percent, but for this particular form it is only 40 percent and the highest risk group for it are women under 50 and black women.

One of the issues with this cancer is that it does not have a good rate of diagnosis and it is essential to catch it in its early stages. Most women are aware of the sense of undertaking regular breast examination, usually in the shower, and to be aware of feeling a new lump.

BUT, IBC first presents as a swollen area near the surface on your breasts and when the skin is dried it will feel red, tender and warm to the touch. This is caused by blocked lymph vessels in the skin and most doctors will not immediately connect this

with breast cancer; you are more likely to have it diagnosed as an infection and given antibiotics to treat it.

Unfortunately, this means that the majority of women with IBC are not diagnosed until they are at stage III (locally advanced) and stage IV (advanced to other organs) which means it has to be treated very fast and aggressively with a regime of chemotherapy, followed by surgery and radiation.

On the natural front, it seems that adding L-glutamine during chemotherapy could be helpful. This key amino acid is essential to immune function and a 1980's study found that it. According to a study conducted in the late 90s, when l-glutamine is given with chemotherapy, it significantly reduces the toxicity of the chemicals. I would also add in the very good homoeopathic remedy that counteracts the side effects of chemotherapy and is available by mail order from Galen Pharmacy in Dorset on 01305 263996 who are always happy to discuss any remedies with you.

HEALTH BITES:

1 ASTROLOGICAL HEALTH PROFILES

Sagittarius 23 November-21 December

Sagittarians pride themselves on their brain power, but you need to balance this with physical activity. Watch out for:

- * Being a fire sign, with all the impulsiveness that goes with that element, minor accidents can be a problem

- * You are most likely to damage your hips and thighs - especially through sporting accidents.

- * Sagittarians need to watch their diet as you do enjoy eating, drinking and being merry. Over-indulgence can lead to liver problems

- * Freedom is important for your wellbeing and if you feel restricted then physical symptoms can arise

Care seems to be the watchword here; being aware of your surroundings to avoid those minor accidents and not overstraining your body with over vigorous exercise. Food lovers that you are do need to be kind to your liver and not overload it with too much rich food and drink and monthly detox of a day just on a

single type of fruit would give your body the rest it probably needs.

2 YET ANOTHER DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

Well apart from the obvious ones we all know about; that men need more of the duvet and don't eat as much as chocolate, it seems our aspirin response is different too. A daily aspirin for those men over 45 and women over 55 is often recommended as a preventive for heart attacks, but it seems that the benefit differs by gender.

Men do get fewer heart attacks with a daily dose, but it doesn't affect women in the same way. Their benefit lies in the fact it reduces the risk of stroke, not of heart attacks.

New research published this month in the Annals of Internal Medicine has also focused on the possible dangers of regular aspirin use in causing gastrointestinal bleeding. This risk gets higher as the dose increases and the new recommendation is that no more than 75mg a day is just as effective as higher amounts. If you already have heart disease then taking 100mg or more of aspirin a day will not be of any benefit for the existing condition.

3 OXYGEN THERAPY SHOWING HOPE FOR AUTISTIC CHILDREN

Many studies have suggested treatment that might help autistic children but the majority of them are anecdotal and not generally provable or applicable. Each child is different, but a new oxygen therapy has been put through a controlled trial and is reporting definite clinical improvements.

Six centres in the US that specialise in treating autistic children have been running a controlled trial on 62 children aged from two to seven. They have been using something they call hyperbaric therapy which involves the child being put into a pressurized chamber and then breathing in pure oxygen.

The children were divided randomly into two groups; one who got 40 hours of treatment in the chamber with an atmospheric pressure of 1.3 atm and the second group who had a much less pressured chamber and a lower dose of oxygen. Changes in their behaviour were monitored using three different criteria; the Clinical Global Impression (CGI) scale, the Aberrant Behavior

Checklist (ABC), and the Autism Treatment Evaluation Checklist (ATEC).

Those children who had the treatment level of oxygen and pressure were found to have experienced significant benefits in terms of their overall functioning, eye contact, and social interaction when compared to the children in the non-treatment group.

As this is the first control study to be reported, it is worth investigating whether similar treatment is available in the UK. If your doctor or specialist wishes further information this report appeared in *MLA BMC Pediatrics* (2009, March 16). As Hyperbaric Treatment For Autism Reports Significant Clinical Improvements.

I hope you have found this information useful, but do remember I am not a doctor and cannot give you medical advice, so please always take appropriate action by consulting your own medical advisor if you have concerns about any aspect of your health. Please feel free to pass on any of this information to your friends, or suggest they sign up for the newsletter themselves at my website.

Best wishes for a healthy week - AnnA

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Your Healthy Newsletter from AnnA
Your Weekly Health Prescription - 11 March, 2009

Something for everyone this week; men, women, children, and gardeners. If you don't already enjoy a daily glass of wine there is a report that might make you rethink and head to the wine merchant, and another of my favourite insane - but sadly true - pieces of paid for research that could have been put to much better use.

Wishing you the best of good health from AnnA

In this issue:

- PREMATURE BABIES BENEFIT FROM OMEGA 3
- ORGANIC WEED CONTROL
- GOUT IN MEN HELPED BY VITAMIN C
- DANGERS IN DAYTIME SNOOZING
- ANOTHER REASON TO DRINK WINE

HEALTH BITES:

- Astrological health profiles
- Scorpio 23 October-22 November
- Small waist - good lungs?
- Oh really?

PREMATURE BABIES BENEFIT FROM OMEGA 3

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Having a premature baby can be a time of great worry, and although medical knowledge has hugely increased the survival rate, there are still potential health problems for such babies that can affect how they develop. The major concern is for their mental development as they may be slower than babies that go to full term, as well as not having fully developed lungs and digestive systems.

A clinical trial in Australia however offers a simple solution that could help, and although it has only been running for 18 months they are claiming interesting results. For adults, the benefits of omega-3 are well known but so far no one has thought to see if they could also help such young babies. The Australian study was published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) and carried out at the Adelaide Women's and Children's Hospital.

They used normal omega33 supplements from fish oil that you would buy in any health store and gave them to 272 nursing mothers of premature babies. They were trying to duplicate the amount of omega-3 that full-term babies usually receive in the womb during the third trimester of pregnancy and that premature babies miss out. They found that just 6 pills a day improved the cognitive ability of the babies when tested 18 months after birth.

Interestingly, the benefit seemed to apply solely to girls as the mothers of boys who took the supplements didn't see any substantial difference. The doctors believe however that this is not due to a problem with the supplements but to the fact that boys generally develop slightly later than girls so a test over a longer period may show the same results. Differences are really going to persist."

BUT please don't think that getting your omega-3's naturally from fish and seafood during pregnancy is a precautionary measure as most doctors advise pregnant women to avoid these foods. However, it certainly couldn't hurt to take the supplements and if it doesn't improve the baby's health it will certainly help the mother's.

#### ORGANIC WEED CONTROL

I know it's not yet officially spring and weeds are something you are only dreaming about in the long hot summer to come - yes, I can dream too - but it's best to be prepared. Healthy eating is dependent on healthy food and using organic methods to keep the garden under control is easier now than ever. Scientists at the US Agricultural Research Service have a new one way for you, they are suggesting you use white mustard seed.

It contains a compound called sinalbin; that's the one that gives the mustard its bite and they think it could be just the thing for killing off or suppressing particular weedy grasses and annual broadleaf weeds

The scientists turned the mustard seed into a sort of mulchy meal (no I'm not a gardener but that's what it looks like to me) and spread it thickly over a trial area and found that two weeks after application it reduced common weeds by up to 90 per cent. However, don't apply it round your vegetables, particularly onions until they are past the two leaf stage as they didn't seem to do too well. If you don't fancy mulching the plants why not just plant some around the bed as it ought to at least have a deterrent effect and the strong aroma will certainly keep the neighbourhood cats away

#### GOUT IN MEN HELPED BY VITAMIN C

Crusty old colonels with their feet propped on a cushion and waving a glass of port is the popular stereotype of gout, but sadly the truth is far more common. Traditionally, gout has most commonly developed in middle aged and older people - mostly men - but the condition is now being seen in younger people and also more frequently in women. A recent report suggested that, in the UK, it had increased by about 17 percent between 2007 and 2008. The reasons for this increase are unclear but it may be linked with dietary change and obesity definitely seems to increase the risk of gout.

It's caused by a build-up of uric acid in the blood which forms crystal deposits in and around the joints, a form of arthritis, which is what causes the pain and inflammation typical of the condition. However a new study in British Columbia, Vancouver, has some good news - at least for men. The researchers suggest that vitamin C might affect the reabsorption of uric acid by the kidneys, increase the speed at which the kidneys work, or protect against inflammation; all of which can reduce the risk of gout.

They examined the relationship between vitamin C intake and gout between 1986 and 2006 in 46,994 men and during 20 years of follow-up, 1,317 men developed gout. Compared with men who had a vitamin C intake of less than 250 milligrams per day, the relative risk of gout was 17 percent lower for those with a daily intake of 500 to 999 milligrams, 34 percent lower for those with an intake of 1,000 to 1,499 milligrams per day and 45 percent lower for those with an intake of 1,500 milligrams per day or higher. For every 500-milligram increase in their vitamin C intake, the men's risk for gout appeared to decrease by 17 percent. Compared with men who did not take vitamin C supplements, those who took 1,000 to 1,499 supplemental milligrams per day had a 34 percent lower risk of gout and those who took 1,500 supplemental milligrams per day had a 45 percent lower risk. and vitamin C appears to reduce the levels of uric acid in the blood.

What all those boring statistics actually mean is that vitamin C definitely seems to lower a man's risk of gout so it's worth supplementing to a level of around 1000mg a day, best in two doses of 500mg if you have any history of gout in your family

DANGERS IN DAYTIME SNOOZING

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It's been a busy week for the French, as they also reported recently on a collaborative study with colleagues in Belgium and Denmark on the dangers of dozing off during the day. Now I am a great fan of the siesta, but apparently as you get older you should monitor how sleepy you are feeling during the day as it could be linked to a significantly higher risk of dying from cardiovascular disease.

Significant like in a whopping 49 per cent greater risk than those who didn't feel sleepy during the day. The Three City study is the first to study this phenomenon in Europe and was based on people living independently at home, not in nursing homes or hospitals.

It is early to say how valid the research is, but the advice is that if you are starting to feel more sleepy than usual during the day you report this to your doctor. I would also suggest investigating how to overcome it whether it is a physical issue of not enough exercise, or a mental issue of not enough stimulation to keep you awake. Good supports in this area would be to take up something like tai chi, walk more, find an interesting hobby that stretches you or learn some new skill just for the fun of it.

ANOTHER REASON TO DRINK WINE

One of the fastest growing cancers is Barrett's Esophagus, which is a precursor to oesophageal cancer. That cancer has increased 500 percent in the last 30 years so anything that can help prevent it is good news. Just one glass of red wine a day can lower that risk by 56 percent, according to a new study by the US Kaiser Permanente Division of Research and reported in the March issue of Gastroenterology.

This little known condition currently affects 5 percent of the US population and happens when heartburn or acid reflux permanently damages the oesophageal lining. Unfortunately those who develop Barrett's Esophagus have a 30 - 40 fold higher risk of developing oesophageal cancer because of the Barrett's Esophagus cells ability to mutate into cancer cells.

If you regularly suffer heartburn and take over the counter or prescribed medicines for it then you must check with your doctor on a regular basis because you will not get any warning signs that you may have this condition because it has no obvious symptoms. It is usually diagnosed when someone has an endoscopy

for a bleeding ulcer or heartburn and the condition is revealed.

There is also no treatment available at the moment, so anything that helps prevent it is to be welcomed. In this case that means drinking a glass of wine (red or white - they don't mention rose) every day and that will reduce your risk by 56 per cent. It's only wine that does this - spirits or beer had no effect - at least on the Barrett's Esophagus risk. Wine is already known to be beneficial for the heart, but why it works here is not really known. It may be that the antioxidants in the wine neutralize the oxidative damage caused by gastroesophageal reflux - a known risk factor for Barrett's Esophagus. Or, because most people drink wine with their meals, that the food reduces the potential for damage to the tissue in the oesophagus.

Not a drinker? Then keep your weight down and increase your 5 a day of fruit and vegetables to at least 8 portions and that will also reduce your risk. This research is also backed up by other studies looking at the same issue in Australia and Ireland.

However, if you do constantly suffer from acid reflux and heartburn it would be better to tackle it directly with dietary and lifestyle changes, rather than relying on antacids. Achieving and maintaining a normal body weight and ensuring your diet is high in antioxidants with plenty of vegetables and fruit will go a long way to helping.

HEALTH BITES:

1 ASTROLOGICAL HEALTH PROFILES

Scorpio 24 October - 22 November

Don't worry Scorpio's, no one is reading this but you. I know you are the most secretive sign in the zodiac and you tend to keep problems to yourself, so this is just between you and me. You need to be careful of:

- * Reproductive system problems arising from stress
- * Women can suffer severe period pain and need to have regular cervical smears, particularly following the menopause
- * Men may have stress-related impotence, and need to be vigilant

about checking for early signs of prostate problems

* Constipation, diarrhoea or piles are possible as Scorpio rules physical elimination

Vigilance is the watchword for Scorpios, because you like to keep things hidden you are not likely to share how you are feeling with your nearest and dearest so you must have regular check ups to ensure you stay healthy. Stress is obviously a factor in increasing any physical tendencies so tackle that first and make a resolution to be more open about your health - and anything else.

2 SMALL WAIST - GOOD LUNGS?

A trim waist is usually admired, for beauty if not for health, but now there's an even better reason to avoid putting on weight around your midriff. There's more bad news for people who carry excess weight around their middle because having a big waist measurement is now shown to affect your lungs. The study was done at the French National Institute for Health and Medical Research on 120,000 Parisians and found that factors such as whether the subjects had been or were smokers did not impact their lung function as much as having a large waistline did.

If you are wondering what 'large' means, they defined it as over 35 inches for women and 40 inches for men.

3 OH REALLY?

You know me, I love a good - really useless - piece of research that anyone with a brain cell could have deduced in a nanosecond. In this case, you will be astounded to learn that if you give very young children swimming lessons it will apparently not increase their risk of drowning. I would have thought it would actually be helpful, but truly I could not make this up, and am indebted to the researchers at the National Institutes of Health in the USA for this truly revelatory information.

The research came about because apparently health professionals in the US are concerned that giving swimming lessons to children under 4 might indirectly increase drowning risk by making parents and caregivers less vigilant when the kids are in the water.

While acknowledging that even good swimmers can drown, they want to reassure parents that teaching kids to swim won't increase their risk.

So glad to have cleared that up for you, and if you know of

any research grants available for studying the effects on blood pressure of lying on a couch reading Georgette Heyer novels do let me know, I could make medical history.

I hope you have found this information useful, but do remember I am not a doctor and cannot give you medical advice, so please always take appropriate action by consulting your own medical advisor if you have concerns about any aspect of your health. Please feel free to pass on any of this information to your friends, or suggest they sign up for the newsletter themselves at my website.

Best wishes for a healthy week - AnnA

For free health, creativity and personal development newsletters, as well as books and information please visit my website at www.catalystonline.co.uk

Your Healthy Newsletter from AnnA
Your Weekly Health Prescription - 4 March, 2009

Lots of natural news this week, and a plea for the greater use of coconut oil for your health's sake. The first story is about a cutting edge medical development that may mean no cutting at all, and I want to pay tribute this week to Celia Wright who founded Green Farm, that became Higher Nature and with whom I worked for several years. Celia died last week and she was, with her husband Brian, a great pioneer in bringing the best cutting edge nutrition and supplements to the UK. Her innovation and enthusiasm will be greatly missed. Wishing you the best of good health from AnnA

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UP PERISCOPE AND AWAY!

WE are so used to the wonders of technology these days that we are almost blasé about it, but if you had told me that a periscope might be a diagnostic tool I would have said you were kidding. Not so, because the world's smallest version of the periscope is now being used to look at cells and other micro-organisms from several sides at once.

The magnification involved here is phenomenal and scientists from Vanderbilt Institute for Integrative Biosystems Research and Education (who have invented it) are justly proud of their achievement. Standard laboratory microscopes can only see cells from above and this new 3D view is a major breakthrough. This 'periscope' is truly microscopic in size, with the walls being about the width of a human hair and - another breakthrough - they are inexpensive to produce, unlike other, more complex methods for 3D microscopy and could mean the end of the traditional laboratory microscope.

So far, the researchers have used the mirrored wells to examine how protozoa swim and cells divide as this method is particularly well suited for studying dynamic processes within cells because it can follow them in three dimensions.

INFERTILITY DRUG USED TO TREAT ALCOHOLISM

You do one story on infertility and lo another turns up right after it - but from a different angle. It's not uncommon for a newly developed drug for one condition to have other applications, and in this case a common drug prescribed for male and female infertility and menstrual disorders could hold the key to a more effective treatment for alcoholism. This is

not a small problem either, currently around 1 in 12 of the population are believed to have problems with alcohol dependence or abuse.

This new research was carried out at MLA University of California in San Francisco on Cabergoline, which is marketed under the trade name Dostinex. It is prescribed to treat conditions caused by excess of the hormone prolactin but when tested in a laboratory trial on rats it apparently decreased their alcohol consumption. Didn't know rats had a drink problem, but it was reported in the Biological Psychiatry journal and they seem quite excited about it.

The drug didn't make the rats seek out more sugar or water but was specific on reducing their alcohol consumption. The scientists are excited because the current drugs used for treating alcoholism have a side effect that decreases the pleasure of drinking and so people are more reluctant to stick with the regime. Relapse is another major issue in alcohol treatment programmes and another benefit of cabergoline is that it was shown to be effective in reducing the alcohol craving and the rate of relapse. It has also been tested in a pilot study on cocaine addicts, and the results are encouraging as there seemed to be a reduction in the drug's use.

LACK OF SLEEP ENCOURAGES COLDS

We all know that a good night's sleep can make many things better, but it can also protect you from catching a cold. The less sleep you get, then the more at risk you are of developing a cold if you have been exposed to the virus according to a study conducted by researchers from Carnegie Mellon University.

Sleep is vital to help the body repair and renew itself and a poor sleep pattern can lead to a compromised immune system. However it wasn't before realised that something as ordinary as our reaction to a cold is dependent on us getting a good night's sleep.

So how much is enough? In the study, people who slept an average of less than seven hours a night were nearly three times more likely to develop cold symptoms than people who slept eight or more hours a night. Restless sleeper? Well unfortunately you are nearly six times as likely to develop cold symptoms than those who put their head down and sleep right through.

THREE NATURAL WAYS TO REDUCE CHOLESTEROL

With statin drugs continuing to get a bad press as the best cholesterol lowering solution, I thought it might help to remind you of the alternatives. First of all cholesterol is not evil, you need it for many bodily functions, and you don't have to resort to drugs to keep your levels in balance.

A problem with the drugs, apart from side effects from eye problems and muscle pain to heart arrhythmias and liver disorders, is that new research by an Iowa State University scientist now suggests statins also could be affecting our memory and cognitive ability because they may be blocking the brain from making cholesterol which is vital for optimum brain function. Without adequate cholesterol from the brain, the release of neurotransmitters is affected and they are key for our memory functions.

So if you need to reduce cholesterol, try these three natural ways to do it:

1. Omega-3 Fatty Acids because they raise HDL (the good) and lower LDL cholesterol (the bad) levels. Use Bertie Wooster's favourite food at least twice a week - that means oily fish like salmon and herring, and walnuts, almonds, and flaxseed oil.
2. Oat Bran & Brown Rice Bran because they both contain very high levels of soluble fibre which has the double whammy of binding fats and absorbing cholesterol.
3. Blueberries, Garlic, & Apples are all good, but not at the same time - if you have a recipe that combines them, please keep it to yourself. Garlic and Blueberries lower cholesterol levels, and your blood pressure while the apples contain fibre that will reduce the amount of cholesterol produced in the liver.

THE AMAZING HEALTH BENEFITS OF COCONUT OIL

Fresh coconut milk is great health drink, but did you know that pure coconut oil has an amazing range of benefits if you add just 3 tablespoons of it to your daily diet?

The countries where consumption of coconut products is highest have very little heart disease compared to the west. India, Sri Lanka and the Phillipines for instance have only 2 deaths per

thousand for heart disease as against the USA where it accounts for nearly half of all deaths. The 'western' complaints of heart disease, diabetes, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and obesity are far less common in these countries and it seems that their consumption of coconut oil is why.

The recommendation is that we don't take in more than 10 percent of our daily intake from saturated fats, but in these countries they are taking in a whopping 50 percent of their calories from saturated fat from coconut products. You would expect therefore that they would be seriously at risk and yet they show no evidence of the most common heart diseases in the population.

When the study put these people on a western diet, they began to develop heart disease within days to weeks, but when they went back to their normal coconut-based diet, the diseases disappeared. So adding coconut oil to your diet is a good thing, but it has to be the right kind. Avoid hydrogenated or refined oil and only go for pure, unrefined, organic, coconut oil as that is what research has shown is most effective. In fact avoid hydrogenated fats and oils of any kinds as they do encourage high cholesterol.

This latest research using pure coconut oil found that people on the study who were given it were healthier at the end of the study than those who consumed the refined and hydrogenated coconut and/or vegetable oils or a low fat diet. In some US hospitals it is even being added to adult nutrition formulas for tube feeding because it is so nutritious. It helps reduce cholesterol, balance blood sugar and improve energy. You can substitute pure coconut oil for any cooking or baking purpose, even frying, and spread it on your toast instead of butter.

HEALTH BITES:

1 ASTROLOGICAL HEALTH PROFILES

Libra 24 September - 23 October

Librans are the good guys of the health world as generally you have sensible eating habits and enjoy using your body which means you find it easy to keep fit. However, you don't get a totally free pass and there are some health issues you need to watch out for:

- * Kidneys can be a problem area for you, and poor elimination of bodily wastes and toxins can cause headaches and fluid retention. Drink lots of water.
- * Co-ordination and balance problems can be a symptom of other physical or emotional issues
- * Relationship is very important to this sign and stress and illness can be brought on by discord or loneliness
- * Your environment is very important to you, and a tense atmosphere or dirty surroundings causes extreme stress

So sort those relationships out so you aren't getting stressed, and make your surrounding beautiful and nurturing. Make that daily 1.5 litres of water part of your routine and have a regular massage as that will also help expel any toxins your body is holding on to.

2 CHAMOMILE TEA HELPS DIABETICS CONTROL BLOOD SUGAR

Chamomile, also known as manzanilla, is believed to contain more antioxidants than nearly any other natural dietary source. It is a long-established herbal remedy for relieving stress and anxiety, improving sleep, and many other common complaints.

Now it seems it may also be able to help diabetics control their blood sugar and prevent serious complication. Just by having a cup of chamomile tea with meals could help prevent the progress of hyperglycemia and diabetic complications is the conclusion of a study jointly undertaken by the University of Toyama in Japan and Aberystwyth University in Wales.

Chamomile appeared to reduce the activity of an enzyme called aldose reductase, which plays an important role in sugar metabolism. Aldose reductase helps turn glucose into sorbitol, a different sugar. In diabetics, the build up of sorbitol has been directly linked to neuropathy and blindness, as this sugar moves across cell membranes less freely than glucose and thus has a tendency to build up in nerve and eye tissue.

Chamomile tea isn't everyone's favourite - I can't stand it myself - but this might be worth a try. Some of the best teas with chamomile are from the American company Celestial Seasonings as they have a depth of flavour that others seem to lack, but experiment and see what you like - adding a squeeze of lemon might help too.

3 THE ONLY THING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT LOSING WEIGHT

There are a million diets out there, but if you want to lose weight the only thing you need to focus on is eating less. Obvious but true, and now Dr. Frank Sacks, a professor at the Harvard School of Public Health, has published a study in the New England Journal of Medicine that confirms what - if you have any sense - you already know. No one diet is better than any other, just find one you like and take in fewer calories than you are currently consuming. You just need to get the ratio right between the calories you burn up, and the calories you take in and the ideal diet plan would be to have 750 fewer calories each day than you are expending.

The Professor tested out various heart-healthy diets and asked the participants to also exercise 90 minutes a week. They all lost on average around 13 lbs. after six months of dieting, or about 7% of their starting weight, regardless of which diet plan they followed. As ever I am astounded that anyone would pay good money to prove something we all know - and may not like, but that's another issue - but the US National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute handed over the funds for the study and they were delighted with the findings. However, most of the participants couldn't sustain that 750 calorie mark and most by the end of the trial consuming only 225 calories less than they expended.

The researchers concluded that this target was too high, and a gradual reduction is better, and I entirely agree with them. A small reduction in calorie intake that is gradual and sustained will see the best results and a weight loss of just 5 percent can make a substantial difference to your health. So whatever diet you choose just eat less, and exercise more = boring, but effective.

I hope you have found this information useful, but do remember I am not a doctor and cannot give you medical advice, so please always take appropriate action by consulting your own medical advisor if you have concerns about any aspect of your health. Please feel free to pass on any of this information to your friends, or suggest they sign up for the newsletter themselves at my website.

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