

DC Online

Brian Sutton, DC

Tight Neckties

The British Journal of Ophthalmology reports that a tight necktie will raise intraocular pressure, causing a possible misdiagnosis of glaucoma - or perhaps contributing to the disorder. Researchers say that neckties can constrict the jugular vein, leading to the pressure build-up. Pressure changes were detectable in about two thirds of the subjects tested.¹

1. *British Journal of Ophthalmology*, July 29, 2003.
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High Asthma Rate in Harlem

A study of New York City children from the Robin Hood Foundation² reports an asthma rate twice what would normally be expected in the city's Harlem district. One in every four children under the age of 13 appears to be afflicted with the respiratory disorder - possibly the highest documented rate in the country. The figures come from researchers who canvassed a 24-block neighborhood in an effort to assess the status of every child.³

1. www.robinhood.org.
 2. Associated Press, April 19, 2003.
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Choose the Whole Tomato

Lycopene, the compound credited for reducing prostate cancer in various research projects assessing the effects of tomato products in the diet, does not appear to work as well outside of the tomato. Research from the National Cancer Institute⁴ reports that lycopene supplements do not offer the same protection as whole tomato products. This study involving 194 male rats found a 26 percent lowered risk of death from prostate carcinoma among rats fed powdered tomato with their normal diet. Lycopene supplementation produced only a small fraction of that benefit. Both groups were beaten, however, by another group that was on a restricted calorie diet, with a 32 percent lowered incidence of the cancer.

1. *J Natl Cancer Inst* 2003;95:1578-1586.
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Alcoholic Predisposition

A report from the *Archives of General Psychiatry*⁵ has found that your risk of alcoholism triples if your mother imbibed heavily at least once during her pregnancy. According to the study, approximately 14 percent of young adults have alcohol problems at age 21 if their mothers had at least one episode of five or more drinks while pregnant. The usual rate of alcoholism at that age is

4.5 percent.

1. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, April 2003.
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Vitamin C for Secondhand Smoke

A small study from researchers at the University of California, Berkeley, suggests that vitamin C supplementation may reduce some of the risks of secondhand smoke. Researchers looked at the levels of F2-isoprostanes in 67 nonsmokers' blood after two months on a diet supplemented with vitamin C. Blood levels of the compound, thought to be involved in some cancer formations, dropped by 11.4 percent. Vitamin E and the antioxidant alpha-lipoic acid did not appear to have much of an effect.⁶

1. *Nutrition and Cancer*, Aug. 5, 2003.
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Chocolate for Blood Pressure

A study from Germany suggests that mild hypertension can be improved with a little dark chocolate. Volunteers were given a three-ounce chocolate bar (white or dark) every day for two weeks. The white chocolate group did not show a significant change in pressure, but those given dark chocolate lowered their BP readings by five points (systolic) and two points (diastolic). The researchers think that polyphenols in the dark chocolate (also present in red wine) were responsible for the effect.⁷ The study was not funded by any chocolate producers.

1. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Aug. 27, 2003.
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Menopause Munchies

A study from Oregon Health and Science University⁸ concludes that changes associated with menopause may be responsible for an increased appetite, leading to significant weight gain. Researchers used monkeys, which have menstrual cycles and go through menopausal changes similar to humans, for this study. After their ovaries were removed, the monkeys began eating 67 percent more food and gained another five percent of body weight, on average, in just a few weeks. For some reason, however, the monkeys that ate the most food were not always the heaviest, something that was a bit mystifying to the researchers. Another finding that may interest women who are afraid to eat in the evening, for fear of putting on pounds while they sleep: The time of day when most of the eating occurred did not appear to make any difference in how much weight was gained.

1. Reuters, Nov. 13, 2003, reporting on the work of researcher Judy Cameron.
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Exercise for Children's Hearts

A study from Australia concludes that the beginnings of cardiovascular disease detectable in obese children can be reversed by exercise. Researchers checked 35 children (who were about twice their ideal weight) for vascular endothelial function, a test that detects early atherosclerotic changes. The children were put on an eight-week weight-training program or a regimen of physical

games, depending on their age. Most did not lose weight, but did convert fat to muscle mass. The endothelial function was significantly improved at the end of the study, suggesting a lowered risk of eventual heart disease as adults. Unfortunately, two months after the study and enforced exercise ended, the children's blood vessels had returned to their original state.⁹

1. Reuters, Nov. 11, 2003, reporting on the work of Daniel Green of the University of Western Australia.

Exercise Your Brain

A report to a recent meeting of the Society for Neuroscience in New Orleans¹⁰ concluded that physical exercise is also good for the brain, something exercise enthusiasts have known all along. Measuring brain capillary volume in monkeys, researchers found higher blood flows (presumably translating into more alertness and quicker brain function) in the animals that performed a treadmill exercise program for a number of weeks. They found the most improvements in those that had been sedentary at the start of the program.

1. Reuters, Nov. 8, 2003.

Aspirin Withdrawals

A new study shows that suddenly stopping the habit of taking an aspirin a day may induce a heart attack. Upon examining records of 1,236 heart patients at the University Hospital Pasteur in Nice, France, researchers found 51 who had severe incidents of heart attacks or unstable angina within a week of stopping daily aspirin. None had experienced such symptoms previously. "Our study shows that aspirin therapy cannot be safely stopped in any case, but especially in patients with a history of coronary disease,"¹¹ warns one of the researchers. Patients are routinely asked to temporarily stop taking aspirin in preparation for a number of medical and dental procedures, to prevent excessive blood loss.

1. Reuters, Oct. 29, 2003, reporting on the work of Dr. Emile Ferrari.

Aspirin and the Pancreas

According to an analysis of the Nurses Health Study at Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, women who take two aspirins a day may nearly double their risk of pancreatic cancer. The study involved women who took such doses for 20 years or more (a factor that, in itself, should be cause for concern).¹² This study contradicts one released in 2002 from the University of Minnesota.

1. Associated Press, Oct. 28, 2003, reporting on a study presented by Dr. Eva Schernhammer to a meeting of the American Association for Cancer Research in Phoenix.

An Orange a Day

According to a new analysis of 48 international research efforts, citrus fruits can reduce the risk of upper digestive tract cancers. An extra serving of citrus each day, researchers say, can reduce mouth, larynx and stomach cancers up to 50 percent. Strokes may be reduced by nearly 20

percent. Oranges probably have the highest numbers of antioxidant compounds, which may explain these health benefits. Australia's Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation performed the study.¹³

1. Reuters, Dec. 3, 2003, reporting on a study by researcher Katrine Baghurst.

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