

## DC On-Line (Research)

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### Long-Term Effects of Carbon Monoxide

A study from the Minneapolis Heart Institute Foundation<sup>1</sup> concludes that one episode of moderate to severe carbon monoxide poisoning can have lingering effects. Researchers found that more than a third of such individuals incurred damage to their heart muscle. Of those sustaining heart damage, one in four died within seven years. The study looked at 230 patients who had a toxic exposure to CO.

1. *JAMA*, Jan. 25, 2006.
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### Cooler Heads Prevail

A group of researchers made up of scientists from the United States, England and New Zealand attempting to find a way to mitigate the effects of oxygen deprivation that sometimes will happen during birth have discovered something that appears helpful. They found that a cap filled with cool water (to lower the cranial temperature a few degrees) placed on the infant's head for 72 hours decreased the risk of cerebral palsy, epilepsy, blindness and other problems.<sup>2</sup> The study is available online at [www.thelancet.com](http://www.thelancet.com). The technique was tested on 234 full-term infants.

1. Reuters, Jan. 28, 2006.
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### Sleep or Gain Weight

A long-term study of middle-aged women reports that too little sleep can lead to putting on a few extra pounds. Researchers found that women who slept only five hours or less each night were 32 percent more likely to gain at least 33 pounds during the 16 years of the study, compared to those who averaged at least seven hours of shuteye.<sup>3</sup> The study could not correlate the weight gain to diet or exercise habits; theories involve a modification of the basal metabolic rate, or the possibility of fewer calories burned during the day because the subject was too tired to "fidget."

1. Reuters, May 24, 2006, reporting on the work of Dr. Sanjay Patel of Case Western Reserve University.
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### Cocoa for the Skin

A study published in the June issue of *Nutrition*<sup>4</sup> suggests that the high level of flavanols present in a good cup of hot cocoa may lead to healthier and more resilient skin. Researchers randomly prescribed women a daily cup of cocoa containing either a high or low level of flavanols. After three months, imaging tests suggested that those women drinking the flavanol-rich cocoa had

improved their skin texture, thickness and hydration. They also appeared more resistant to ultraviolet radiation.

1. [Study available online.](#)
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### Prenatal Alcohol

A study<sup>5</sup> from the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine reports that only a couple of alcoholic drinks per week is enough to stunt an unborn child's intelligence later on. Researchers found a significant effect on IQ testing scores among certain children whose mothers had consumed between two and six drinks per week during their pregnancy, particularly during the second trimester. However, the correlation was only seen in African-American children, not in Caucasians. The researchers were not able to reconcile this disparity except to suggest a possible genetic influence.<sup>6</sup>

1. *Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research*, June 2006.
  2. Reuters, May 26, 2006, reporting on the work of Dr. Jennifer Willford and colleagues.
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### Prenatal Blood Pressure

While many physicians become alarmed when they detect an elevation of blood pressure in a soon-to-be mother, a group of Canadian researchers have determined that there may be a beneficial component.<sup>7</sup> This study finds that among babies born prematurely, infant mortality is significantly lower if the blood pressure of the mother is a bit higher. This did not hold true for babies born full-term, but for preemies it appears that something about the higher blood pressure seems to help the little guy out, especially if the baby is smaller than normal or is born to a first-time mother. The study examined statistics for more than 17 million births from 1995 through 2000.

1. *British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology*, May 2006.
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### Heavy Heartburn

Women who put on a few pounds, even if they still are not considered overweight, tend to have more problems with heartburn according to a study from Boston.<sup>8</sup> The researchers found that as little as 10 pounds of extra weight could trigger episodes of reflux. Many women who subsequently lost the gained weight reported that their symptoms improved. Data was taken from the ongoing Nurse's Health Study, and tracked more than 10,000 women and their health.

1. *New England Journal of Medicine*, June 1, 2006.
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### Antioxidants for Migraines

Research from the Kaiser Permanente Medical Center in Anaheim, Calif.<sup>9</sup> suggests that antioxidants may help migraine headache sufferers. This small study used the MIDAS test (a measure of migraine severity) before and after three months of antioxidant therapy, and involved patients that were not responding well to drug therapies. On average, the test scores were cut in half at the end of the study. Headache episodes went from an average of 15 per month to about

nine; severity decreased as well. A small percentage of the volunteers showed no improvement. The supplements given contained pine bark extract and vitamins C and E.

1. Reuters, June 1, 2006, reporting on the work of Dr. Sirichai Chayasirisobhon.
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### Dark Soya Antioxidants

If you really want a high-potency antioxidant supplement, Singapore researchers report that dark soya sauce (made from fermented soybeans) is one of the best. They say that the antioxidant activity is 10 times that of red wine, and more than 150 times that of vitamin C. Testers also report a dramatic increase in circulation for a few hours following consumption.<sup>10</sup>

1. Reuters, June 3, 2006, reporting on a study from the National University of Singapore.
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### Breathing Instead of Inhaling

Researchers from the University of Sydney say that persons who frequently use short-acting inhalers to treat their asthma may want to try some breathing exercises. They report that patients who were taught certain breathing techniques were able to reduce their dependency on inhaler medications. Another alternative, they say, is performing a number of nonspecific upper-body exercises. In their testing, researchers demonstrated an 86 percent decrease in the need for beta-2 agonist inhalers and a 50 percent drop for corticosteroid inhalers.<sup>11</sup>

1. <http://thorax.bmjournals.com>, June 5 edition.
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### Too Much Fluoride

A study from the University of Iowa's College of Dentistry<sup>12</sup> finds that many children are getting a bit more fluoride than they should. Examination of the teeth of 408 Iowa children revealed signs of fluorosis in one in three. White streaks on the teeth are one of the telltale signs of the condition. Later effects include loss of enamel, pitting, and bone weakness. Researchers blame infant formula and large quantities of 100 percent fruit juice at a young age, supplements, and other dietary intakes for the findings. In some communities where the amount of fluoride in the water approaches the maximum federal limit, the rate of serious dental fluorosis can approach 10 percent in young people.<sup>13</sup>

1. Reuters, March 13, 2006, reporting on the work of Dr. Teresa Marshall.
  2. Reuters, March 22, 2006, citing a report from the National Academy of Sciences.
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### Exercise for Gestational Diabetes

A study of more than 21,000 women from the Harvard School of Public Health in Boston<sup>14</sup> concludes that a woman who habitually exercises prior to pregnancy is less likely to experience pregnancy-induced diabetes. The researchers also correlated the amount of time spent watching television (and therefore not exercising) to a significantly increased likelihood of gestational diabetes. This type of diabetes has been linked to eventual development of type II diabetes as women get older; there is also some evidence that it may affect the baby years later.

1. *Archives of Internal Medicine*, March 13, 2006.

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