

MedWire

Researchers at Oxford University have completed a study of almost one million obese adults and concluded that **obesity may shorten life expectancy by up to ten years.**

Health officials in Massachusetts are expected to mandate that **all public school students be weighed and measured once yearly** so that their parents can see the trends in their growth. The purpose of this endeavour is to curb rising childhood obesity rates.



**Teen pregnancy rates in the United States are on the rise** for the second year in a row, according to the National Centre for Health Statistics. After a 14 year decline, the rate has risen 4.8% in the last two years.

Several international agencies are **outraged by the comments of Pope Benedict XVI**, who on a recent trip to Africa condemned the use of condoms and said that they will only worsen the AIDS epidemic currently ravaging the African population.

An Alzheimer's specialist at the University of Columbia has completed research showing that there may be a **link between diabetes and increased risk of developing Alzheimer's.** Doctors have long been aware of damages to blood vessels caused by diabetes, the connection is still being studied.

President Obama has reversed former President George W. Bush's 2001 block on government funded **embryonic stem cell research** through an executive order. However, the Dickey-Wicker Amendment of 1996 continues to prevent researchers from creating embryos through government funding.

Researchers in Toronto have found that religious people are **less likely to be a victim of stress or anxiety** when in a stressful situation.

New research shows that **women in bad marriages** suffer serious health consequences, including a tendency to develop obesity, depression, and high blood pressure. These factors lead to heightened risk of diabetes, stroke, and heart disease.

British Columbia has become the first province to have a **restriction on the amount of trans-fat** that restaurants and cafeterias are allowed to serve.

A study in *Nature Structural & Molecular Biology* reports that scientists have been able to **isolate antibodies targetting sections of the flu virus** that do not mutate from year to year; suggesting that a permanent vaccine for influenza could be developed. Clinical trials for the antibodies may begin within the next three years.

Anger has been found to trigger **potentially deadly heart rhythms** in certain individuals. The changes brought on by anger may lead to future arrhythmias and sudden cardiac arrest.

The Canada Food guide recommends only a **glass of juice a day** because of the excessive amounts of sugar and lack of nutrients in processed juices.



British and Canadian scientists recommend sufficient vitamin D intake from an early age to prevent multiple sclerosis, after studying a vitamin-D sensitive gene variant that causes multiple sclerosis.

# MED *wire*

A recent study has found that people who keep diet **diaries about their daily food** intake are able to lose weight easier than people who do not.



Researchers have developed tiny **polymer balls loaded with neural stem cells** that can be injected into brain regions that suffered from stroke damage. The polymer balls contain the growth of the cells within the damaged area and eventually biodegrade to leave room for the development of blood vessels.

New programs targeted at **eliminating child obesity** in the UK require participation from the entire family as the focus shifts away from dieting and towards permanent lifestyle changes. Childhood obesity rates in the UK have been on the rise for the last 50 years.

A new study by British scientists finds that children who watch the highest amounts of television (and who are generally less active) have a significantly **higher risk of developing asthma.** They believe that people need to be active when they are young so that deep breathing can stretch their airways.

While men are often accused of regarding **women in bikinis as objects**, new research shows that the brain areas for handling tools light up when viewing scantily clad beauties. Brain areas for thinking about the other's viewpoint were inactive in men who scored the highest.

The **HIV virus is evolving** to develop mutations to evade humane responses, even as research is conducted around the globe. This should not be taken to suggest that the virus is winning the battle, but it is possible that as the virus changes, different immune responses come into play that may neutralize it.

Swedish researchers have found that people who are obese at 18 are **twice as likely to die prematurely** compared to their normal weight peers. Being obese or overweight is just as deadly as smoking.

The Ontario government is encouraging teenagers to receive a **mumps booster shot**. Mumps can cause serious side effects in young adults, such as pancreatitis, deafness, and meningitis.



Nearly 40% of Americans are beginning to turn to **alternative and unconventional medicine** for ailments such as back pain and arthritis.

Although many new mechanisms of genetic screening are constantly being developed, genetic counsellors warn that they do not necessarily need to be offered to the public. Some of the **genes identify disorders that are untreatable**, such as the gene for Huntington's disease. It is argued that patients should see counsellors before taking the tests so that they can understand their results and implications.

Researchers in London may have found a way to **cure children with fatality-inducing peanut allergies**. By giving children small doses of peanut flour (~5mg) and working up to a daily dose equivalent to five peanuts, doctors may be able to induce desensitisation.

Researchers from the University of Minnesota have found the physiological mechanism behind how **scratching relieves an itch**. The study suggests the act of scratching blocks the activity of nerve cells in the spinothalamic tract that transmits itching sensations to the brain.

A leading scientist at Oxford University has claimed that social networking websites are causing **alarming changes in the brains of young users**, resulting in shorter attention spans and making them more self-centred.

**Vitamin D may help protect against the common cold**. It is particularly deficient in winter, and those with low levels of it are likely to report a recent cold. In excess, Vitamine D is responsible for kidney stones and other problems.



Marijuana may increase the risk of developing an **aggressive form of testicular cancer**. Chronic marijuana use affects the male reproductive system, as the risk for cancer is higher in chronic users.



American researchers have identified all the **1,166 proteins in human saliva**, a discovery which could prove useful for diagnosing fatal diseases, such as cancer. Patients may soon have to spit into a cup to be diagnosed, making it easier, cheaper and painless.

After the recent death of a two-month-old boy, a doctor warns that **leaving a baby reclined in a car seat** for an extended amount of time can lead to blocked airways and subsequent asphyxiation.

Scientists of the McMaster Stem Cell and Research Institute have discovered how **stem cells develop and specialize into blood cells** through specific cell communication pathways.

In a groundbreaking study, British researchers have claimed to identify the **gene that codes for happiness**. The individuals who carry two 'long' alleles of this gene focus on the positive aspects of their life and end up being more sociable and with better psychological health.

An American study has suggested that **music with degrading lyrics** could prompt teens to begin having sex earlier. Those who listened to music with aggressive or explicit sexual phrases were twice as likely to be sexually active.

AIDS has now surpassed both tuberculosis and rabies as the **number one infectious disease in China**, say officials in Beijing. Rising numbers of infected patients are causing health care workers to lobby for increased awareness and preventative measures.

A recent report from the Harbor-UCLA medical centre notes that gram-negative bacteria are becoming more and more **resistant to current antibiotics**, and warns that without increasingly aggressive research an infectious 'superbug' could manifest.



A study recently published in JAMA shows that the **flu shot is better and more effective** for North American adults than its newly available nasal spray counterpart. However, experts do still recommend the spray for children.

Canadian scientists at Mount Sinai Hospital have found a **new way to turn skin cells into stem cells**. The applications of this finding are endless, and researchers are excited about the future possibilities for stem-cell therapy.

In a recent study, an international team of scientists found that eating **broccoli sprouts** may help tame the *H. Pylori* bacteria that is associated with stomach ulcers in cancer.