



Hospital Admission Higher in Winter for Women for Stroke and Heart Attack

Emergency room physicians know that in winter, they see an increased number of patients with heart attack symptoms from snow shoveling or outdoor sports activity. However, the World Health Organization recently finished a collaborative study from 24 centers in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America that proved a clear association between climate and hospital admission rates, specifically for women.

The report discussed how cold weather itself, and not the exercise that comes with winter activity, increased the number of women being admitted to the hospital for stroke or heart attack among women aged 15 to 49 years.



The report, which was printed in *The Journal of Clinical Epidemiology* discussed that a five degree drop in temperature was associated with a seven percent increase in admission for stroke and a 12 percent increase in admission for heart attack. The study looked at the relation between three climatic variables, temperature, rainfall and humidity, and the risk of hospitalization among women for venous thromboembolism (blood clots), arterial stroke, and acute myocardial infarction (heart attack). The study included 1146 cases of venous thromboembolism, 2269 patients with stroke, and 369 cases of acute myocardial infarction. Results showed significant association between temperature and the rates of admission for stroke and acute myocardial infarction but not venous thromboembolism.

Authors of the study said that several mechanisms may explain the association between temperature, stroke and heart attack including changes in clotting mechanisms, lipid levels and blood pressure. They said that seasonal variation in lipid levels seems an unlikely explanation for the large seasonal variation in the incidence of stroke recorded in the study. Blood pressure shows a marked seasonal variation being higher in winter (colder) months and that may be a strong risk factor for both stroke and heart attack.

The Advantages of Breast-Feeding

For a time, breast-feeding was largely abandoned in the United States in favor of bottles. Today, breast-feeding is becoming increasingly popular again and because the health benefits for both mother and baby are immense, pediatricians are encouraging mothers to breast-feed.

Data analyzed recently by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences suggested that breast-feeding can reduce the risk of death for infants in their first year of life. Studying infants 28 days to one year of age, researchers compared CDC records of 1,204 children who died of causes other than congenital anomalies or cancer with those of 7,740 children still alive at one year.

The results showed that breast-feeding can potentially prevent up to 720 post-neonatal deaths in the United States each year. Children who were breast-fed had 20 percent lower risk of dying between 28 days and one year than children who were not breast-fed. Longer breast-feeding was associated with lower risk. The effect was the same in both black and white children. (Continued on page 2)

Inside

Alternative Medicine Use on the Rise

A nation-wide government survey of 31,000 people by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention showed that 36 percent of U.S. adults over the age of 18 years use some form of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) 2

Healthy Teeth, Healthy Children A Guide to Pediatric Dentistry

When it comes to their children's health, parents often overlook the importance of regular dental exams. The health of children's teeth can affect many things 3

Indigestion and Hypnotherapy

Getting rid of chronic indigestion may be as easy as closing your eyes. A new study appearing in the current issue of *Gastroenterology* shows 3

Researchers Identify Gene Variation That May Help Predict the Development of Early Onset Cancers

A tiny variation in a gene involved in regulating tumor suppression could increase the development of cancer at an earlier age for some individuals, according to researchers 3

Can't Sleep?

Everyone has a "bad night" of sleep once in a while. Noise, extreme temperature, stress, or overeating are among the many factors that can make it difficult to sleep. But what is insomnia, and how do you know if you have?..... 4

John J. Petillo, PhD
President, UMDNJ

Editorial Board

Henry E. Brezenoff, PhD, Dean
UMDNJ-Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences

Cecile A. Feldman, DMD, MBA, Dean
UMDNJ-New Jersey Dental School

R. Michael Gallagher, DO, Dean
UMDNJ-School of Osteopathic Medicine

David M. Gibson, EdD, Dean
UMDNJ-School of Health Related Professions

Audrey R. Gotsch, DrPH, CHES, Dean
UMDNJ-School of Public Health

Russell T. Joffe, MD, Dean
UMDNJ-New Jersey Medical School

Harold L. Paz, MD, Dean
UMDNJ-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School

Sara Torres, PhD, RN, Dean
UMDNJ-School of Nursing

UMDNJ is dedicated to the pursuit of excellence in education, research, healthcare delivery and community service. Our 5,000 students and 11,000 faculty and staff are committed to improving the health and quality of life for all New Jerseyans. UMDNJ is the largest free-standing public health sciences university in the nation with three medical schools, a dental school, and schools of nursing, public health, health related professions and graduate biomedical sciences on campuses in Newark, New Brunswick/Piscataway, Stratford, Camden and Scotch Plains. The University operates University Hospital and a statewide behavioral healthcare network. It is affiliated with more than 200 healthcare and higher education institutions statewide.

How to reach us

phone: (973) 972-5000
email: degrawlc@umdnj.edu
or write to:
UMDNJ Health Letter
65 Bergen Street
Room 1328
PO Box 1709
Newark, NJ 07101-1709
www.umdnj.edu

UMDNJ Health Letter is published by the Department of Government and Public Affairs. The articles are not intended to give medical advice, which should be obtained directly from a healthcare professional.



Advantage of Breast Feeding (Continued from Page 1)

Breast milk provides all of the nutritional requirements for babies up to 6 months of age, although 200 IU of vitamin D has recently been recommended to be given to all babies, including those who are breast-fed. In addition to a boosted immune system, other studies have proven that breast-feeding:

- Reduces a baby's risk for eczema and asthma
- Helps the mother recover from the stresses of pregnancy, labor, and delivery
- Helps the mother bond with the baby
- Helps lower the mother's risk of breast cancer



Alternative Medicine Use on the Rise

A nation-wide government survey of 31,000 people by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention showed that 36 percent of U.S. adults over the age of 18 years use some form of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM). When prayer specifically for health reasons is included in the survey, the result rose to 62 percent.

CAM is defined as a group of diverse medical and health care systems, practices and products that are not presently considered to be part of conventional medicine. Those categorized as CAM are therapies such as acupuncture and chiropractic, as well as natural therapies that do not require a provider such as herbs or botanical products, special diets and megavitamin therapy.

Overall, the survey revealed that CAM use was greater among a variety of population groups, including women; people with higher education; those who had been hospitalized within the past year; and former smokers.

CAM approaches were most often used to treat back pain or problems, colds, neck pain or problems, joint pain or stiffness, and anxiety or depression. However, only about 12 percent of adults sought care from a licensed CAM practitioner, suggesting that most people who use CAM do so without consulting a practitioner. According to the survey, the 10 most commonly used CAM therapies with percentages were:

- Prayer for own health (43 percent)
- Prayer by others for the respondent's health (24 percent)
- Natural products including herbs, botanicals and enzymes (19 percent)
- Deep breathing exercises (12 percent)
- Participation in prayer group for own health (10 percent)
- Meditation (8 percent)
- Chiropractic care (8 percent)
- Yoga (5 percent)
- Massage (5 percent)
- Diet-based therapies such as Atkins, Ornish and Zone diets (4 percent)



The survey also revealed that 55 percent of adults said they were most likely to use CAM because they believed it would help them when combined with conventional medicine, while 13 percent used CAM because they felt that conventional medicine was too expensive. Fifty percent of the participants thought CAM would be interesting to try.

Healthy Teeth, Healthy Children A Guide to Pediatric Dentistry

When it comes to their children's health, parents often overlook the importance of regular dental exams. The health of children's teeth can affect many things – from eating habits to mood. Nancy Tofsky, DDS, and professor of Pediatric Dentistry at UMDNJ - New Jersey Dental School, explains the importance of good oral health for children.

The First Dental Exam

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry recommends that parents schedule a dental appointment for their child by the age of one. During a child's first dental exam, the dentist will evaluate the teeth that have come in, gums, and fluoride needs. Most importantly, the dentist will review good nutritional and brushing habits with the parent. According to Dr. Tofsky, it is essential that parents learn how to care for their children's teeth from the start. This will help the parent teach the child good oral hygiene habits for the rest of his or her life.



Poor Eating Habits

Your child often does not feel like eating. They pick at their food and even foods they once enjoyed don't seem appealing. What's the reason?

"Often parents are not aware of how a child's teeth can effect their eating habits and vice-versa," stated Dr. Tofsky. "Eating can be a highly unenjoyable experience if a child's mouth or teeth hurt. Children often become used to the pain and therefore, don't realize that their mouth or teeth hurt. They think that the feeling of pain is normal; hence, if a parent asks the child what hurts, they can not give an accurate response. Sometimes if a tooth is abscessed or has an infection, children will have a bad taste in their mouth from blood or puss, as well."



Experts agree that children need food from all the major food groups to grow properly and stay healthy. Too many carbohydrates, both sugars (for example, from cake, cookies, candies, milk, and other sugary foods and beverages) and savory foods and starches (for example, pretzels and potato chips) can cause tooth decay. How long carbohydrates remain on the teeth is the main culprit that leads to tooth decay. Dentists can determine if a child's poor eating habits stem from a painful tooth, infection or sore gums. Other nutritional considerations for proper teeth development are:

- Toddlers should sleep without a bottle because juice, milk and other beverages can absorb into teeth during sleep and cause decay. If your baby needs a bottle at bedtime, plain water is best.
- Fruits and vegetables should be offered as "healthy snacks" instead of carbohydrates or serve cheese with lunch or as a snack. Cheese helps to trigger the flow of saliva, which helps wash food particles away from teeth.

Continued on Page 4

Indigestion and Hypnotherapy

Getting rid of chronic indigestion may be as easy as closing your eyes. A new study appearing in the current issue of *Gastroenterology* shows hypnotherapy can ease the pain, nausea, and bloating caused by an upset stomach and help prevent future episodes.

Researchers found hypnotherapy provided both immediate and long-term relief to people with persistent indigestion and eliminated the need for anti-indigestion medications as long as a year after treatment. Those in the hypnotherapy group also visited their general practitioners or gastroenterologist less often than the others.

However, hypnotherapy has many stumbling blocks to overcome before it can become a widely used treatment for gastrointestinal (GI) problems. For example, few insurance companies cover the cost of hypnotherapy for GI disorders, and few specialists are trained to practice the techniques.

Researchers Identify Gene Variation That May Help Predict the Development of Early Onset Cancers

A tiny variation in a gene involved in regulating tumor suppression could increase the development of cancer at an earlier age for some individuals, according to researchers at The Cancer Institute of New Jersey (CINJ).

The study, conducted by Arnold Levine, Ph.D. and colleagues, appeared in the November 24, 2004 issue of the journal *Cell*. The study showed variations in the p53 gene may affect an individual's development of cancer at an earlier age.

The ability to predict the development of early onset cancers could mean the identification of a group that should be screened at an earlier age for cancers. This slight variation, which involves only one "letter" within the gene, is called a single nucleotide polymorphism, or SNP. If certain SNPs correspond to the likelihood of having a specific disease, the single-letter variations may play an instrumental role in the future of genomic medicine. While looking for SNPs in genes that work with the p53 tumor suppressor, Dr. Levine and his colleagues discovered a relevant SNP in MDM2. MDM2 encodes a p53 regulator that keeps the tumor suppressor from doing its job. Based on this finding, the researchers concluded that in individuals with the MDM2 SNP variation, tumor formation is accelerated and tumors may occur even earlier in life in some hereditary types of cancer.

Healthy Teeth Healthy Children (Continued from Page 3)

- Buy foods that are sugar-free or unsweetened and avoid sugary foods that linger on the teeth. Lollipops, hard candies, cough drops and mints all contribute to tooth decay because they continuously coat the teeth with sugar.
- Offer your child plain water instead of juice or soda. Water does not harm the teeth and aids in washing away any food particles that may be clinging to teeth.
- If your child chews gum, encourage him or her to choose xylitol-sweetened or sugar-free gum. Xylitol has been shown to reduce the amount of bacteria in the mouth and the chewing action helps increase the flow of saliva.

Brush Up on Brushing

Dr. Tofsky recommends brushing immediately after a child's first tooth comes in. Parents should brush the tooth with either a children's toothpaste or adult toothpaste with fluoride. The best way to prevent tooth decay is to use fluoride toothpaste every day. A pea size amount of toothpaste should be placed on a toothbrush made for children. If the child resists the taste of the toothpaste at first, the parent should begin brushing the tooth with just a wet toothbrush.

"Children do not have the proper coordination and motor skills to brush on their own until about age six," noted Dr. Tofsky. Until then, parents should assist the child with brushing, making sure they reach behind teeth, and hard to reach places, especially in the back of the mouth. Brush your child's teeth at least twice a day and after each meal or snack if possible. If brushing between meals is not possible, at least rinse the mouth with water several times.



"Floss your child's teeth at least once a day to help remove particles between teeth and below the gum line," said Dr. Tofsky. Other recommendations include making sure to brush your child's teeth after giving him or her medicine. Medicines such as cough syrups contain sugar that bacteria in the mouth use to make acids. These acids can eat away at the enamel – the protective top layer of the tooth.

Regular Dental Exams

In order to maintain good oral health, children should visit a dentist for check-ups twice a year (every six months). "Your child's teeth can last a lifetime if they begin to practice proper dental care from the beginning," concluded Dr. Tofsky.

Can't Sleep?

Everyone has a "bad night" of sleep once in a while. Noise, extreme temperature, stress, or overeating are among the many factors that can make it difficult to sleep. But what is insomnia and how do you know if you have it?

Insomnia is the medical term for difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep. Insomnia can include:

- Difficulty getting to sleep (taking more than 45 minutes to fall asleep).
- Frequent awakening with inability to fall back to sleep.
- Early morning awakening.

About 60 million Americans each year suffer from insomnia. Insomnia tends to increase with age and affects about 40 percent of women and 30 percent of men. Primary insomnia means that a person is having sleep problems that are not directly associated with any other health condition or problem. Secondary insomnia means that a person is having sleep problems because of something else, such as a health condition like depression, a medication they are taking, or a substance they are using like alcohol.

Acute or short-term insomnia usually does not require treatment. It is often caused by emotional or physical discomfort, and can be related to a single specific event. Causes of acute insomnia can include life stress like a job loss or change, death of a loved one or moving.

Insomnia that lasts more than three nights a week for a month or longer is considered to be chronic insomnia. Chronic insomnia makes it hard to function during the day because of tiredness. According to a recent article published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine*, cognitive behavior therapy is an effective, successful first line treatment to establish normal sleeping patterns for persons with insomnia. Your health care provider may also suggest medication. Most medicines that are used for sleep have side effects and must be used with caution. It is not recommended to use over-the-counter sleeping pills for insomnia. If you think you have insomnia, talk to your health care provider. An evaluation may include a physical exam, a medical history, and a sleep history. you may be referred to a sleep center for special tests. Good night sleep tips:

- Go to sleep at the same time each night and get up at the same time each morning. Try not to take naps during the day because naps may make you less sleepy at night.
- Avoid caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol late in the day. Caffeine and nicotine are stimulants and can keep you from falling asleep. Alcohol can cause waking in the night and interferes with sleep quality.
- Get regular exercise. Try not to exercise 3 hours before bedtime because it may stimulate you and make it hard to fall asleep.
- Make your sleeping place comfortable. Be sure that it is dark, quiet, and not too warm or cold. If light is a problem, try a sleeping mask. If noise is a problem, try earplugs, a fan, or a "white noise" machine to cover up the sounds.
- Follow a routine to help relax and wind down before sleep, such as reading a book, listening to music, or taking a bath.

If you have a question that you would like answered by a UMDNJ expert in a future issue or need additional copies of Health Letter, let us know.

Contact:

phone: (973) 972-5000
email: degawl@umdnj.edu
or write to:
UMDNJ Health Letter
65 Bergen Street
Room 1328
PO Box 1709
Newark, NJ 07101-1709