

## Boost Your Metabolism and Fight Disease

**Feel and look better!** A recent study in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* suggests that overweight people might be able to stay on a low-glycemic diet longer and feel better than those on a low-fat diet. A low-glycemic diet, which includes less sugar, starch and highly refined food, helps keep blood sugar (glucose) steady after a meal. While both diets were designed to produce similar weight loss, the low-glycemic dieters felt less hungry and their metabolism was higher, burning 80 more calories a day without extra activity. (A higher metabolism also helps people feel less tired and cold.) The low-glycemic dieters also had improvements in risk factors for heart disease and diabetes, such as blood pressure, triglyceride levels and insulin resistance.



### Smoking Linked to Panic Disorders

Panic disorders are more common in smokers, and smoking may even cause the condition. Smokers may smoke more to try to relieve symptoms. Smoking cessation with cognitive-therapy-based treatment may help.

University of Vermont

### Better Clot Buster

Blood clots in the brain (a common cause of stroke) dissolve three times better with both ultrasound and the clot-clobbering drug t-PA than with the drug alone. Ultrasound waves help the drug reach the clot.

*New England Journal of Medicine*

### New Teetotalers Get Smarter

Chronic drinkers who stop drinking show signs of brain cell regeneration after one week and new nerve cells in the region of the brain that affects learning and memory after four to five weeks.

*Journal of Neuroscience*

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### Can a mastectomy and reconstructive surgery be performed at the same time?

Yes. There is a technique called the TRAM flap procedure that doctors use to reconstruct the breast at the same time that the cancer is being removed. Patients with early-stage breast cancer are potential

candidates for this surgery. During the procedure, skin, fat and muscle are removed from the abdomen to re-create a natural-looking breast. Keith E. Brandt, M.D., program director for the division of plastic and reconstructive surgery at Washington University in St. Louis, says that women who qualify for simultane-

ous reconstructive surgery get rid of their breast cancer, get a new breast and get a free tummy tuck in one operation. Insurance companies are legally required to cover breast reconstruction surgery with mastectomy. (For general info, go to the American Cancer Society's Web site at [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).)

## Heartburn Alert

A study in the British medical journal *Gut*, involving 47,556 people, found that those who regularly added salt to meals or who were long-term daily smokers (more than 20 years) were 70 percent more likely to have acid reflux (stomach acid rising up the esophagus) than those who did not. Having salty fish or meat three or more times per week increased the risk by 50 percent over that of the subjects who avoided the foods. To their surprise, researchers found that coffee, tea and alcohol consumption did not affect the occurrence of acid reflux among study participants. Exercise and high-fiber breads were shown to offer some protection against the condition.



## More Muscle Equals Lower Blood Pressure

Having more lean body mass (muscle) helps the body to regulate blood pressure, while fat hinders this ability, according to a study in the *American Journal of Hypertension*. Since sodium excretion plays a role in blood pressure regulation, researchers decided to look at how fat and lean tissue affect this function. Study co-author Gregory Harshfield, Ph.D., says that people with more fat have a harder time excreting sodium, possibly because fat causes the body to release a hormone that impedes this process. Proper excretion of sodium helps the body regulate fluctuations in blood pressure so that levels return to normal sooner after stress.

## New Fibroid Fix

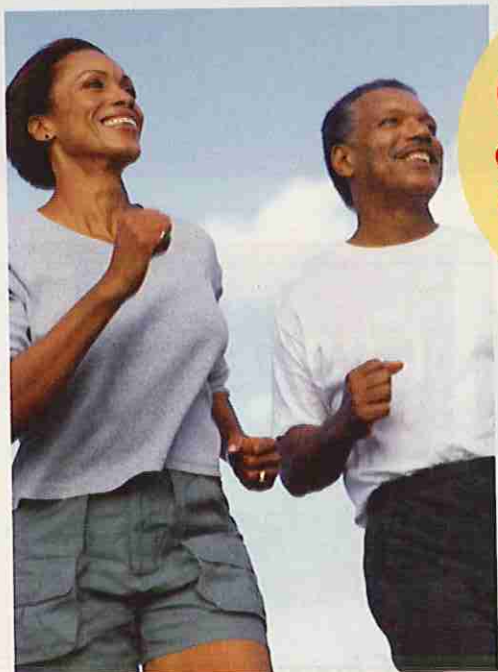
The Food and Drug Administration recently approved a device called the ExAblate 2000 System to treat uterine fibroids, which are non-cancerous tumors that form in and outside the uterus. The noninvasive procedure can be performed in an outpatient setting. It involves using ultrasound waves in conjunction with an MRI to heat and destroy fibroid tissue. "We should be beyond the point in time when uterine fibroid symptoms automatically meant a hysterectomy," says Bobbie Gostout, M.D., a gynecologic surgeon at the Mayo Clinic who was involved in clinical trials using the device. Symptoms of fibroids include heavy prolonged bleeding during menstruation, severe pelvic pain, urinary frequency, constipation, pain during sex and problems conceiving.



## Stop Stressing! The Stay-Younger Secret

University of California, San Francisco, researchers found that the perception of stress, not just the cause of stress, could effect body changes that can lead to faster aging or disease. In the study, women cared either for a chronically ill child or a healthy child. Women who had the highest "perceived psychological stress" in both groups, regardless of their actual life circumstances, had the greatest cellular signs of aging. In fact, the oxidative stress and DNA damage in the most stressed-out women were equivalent to the damage from aging 10 additional years compared to women with the lowest levels of perceived stress. Study co-author Elissa S. Epel, Ph.D., says exercise and relaxation can help combat stress. In addition, cognitive behavior therapy can aid people with excessive anxiety. (For therapists, go to [www.aabt.org/clinical/clinical.htm](http://www.aabt.org/clinical/clinical.htm).)

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### Is there such a thing as male menopause?

"No, not in the same way there is a female menopause," says Emily Senay, M.D., author of *From Boys to Men: A Woman's Guide to the Health of Husbands, Partners, Sons, Fathers, and Brothers*. While there is a gradual decline in hormone production, men often

wrongfully blame low sex drive and fatigue on low testosterone when other problems such as diabetes, vascular disease and heart problems are more likely to contribute to these changes, she reports. Dr. Senay believes men may be able to avoid sexual problems by making healthy changes such as exercising, avoiding alcohol (or

drinking in moderation) and not smoking. Actual symptoms of low testosterone include loss of sex drive, erectile dysfunction, fatigue, mood swings, reduced testicle or penis size, loss of muscle mass, sleep disturbance, memory problems and depression. Men who have symptoms should speak to a doctor about treatment options.

## Zap Away Acne Scars

A recent study in the *Archives of Dermatology* found that a series of laser treatments using a nonablative laser can significantly improve the skin surface of people with mild to moderate acne scars. The treatment works best for scars that are depressed and craterlike rather than scars that are pitted or ice-pick-like, says study author Paul M. Friedman, M.D. All participants received a total of five treatments in three-week intervals. Six months after the last treatment, researchers found that skin roughness decreased by close to 40 percent. Nonablative lasers work by stimulating the collagen beneath the skin surface. The procedure may be a viable option for patients who are not candidates for ablative laser procedures, which treat scars by removing the top layer of skin.