

Just one ozone jab to ease your back pain

London: Ozone is a highly reactive gas which can be beneficial or harmful to human health. But, a single jab of the gas could ease the agony of back pain for millions of people, a new study has claimed.

Scientists at Frankfurt University in Germany found that around two-thirds of patients who had ozone injected said it relieved the pain caused by disc problems.

Ozone could be beneficial or harmful to health, depending where it's in the atmosphere. The 'ozone layer', which extends from six to thirty miles above the Earth's surface, protects us from the Sun's harmful ultraviolet ra-



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QUICK RELIEF

diation. But at ground-level, it can be a dangerous air pollutant that damages the airways and inflames the lining of the lungs, the Daily Mail reported.

In recent years, however, researchers have been studying its potential as a remedy for herniated discs. This is where discs in the spine which normally act as shock absorbers for the body become damaged and inflamed, pressing against nearby nerves and causing pain and numbness.

Treatments usually involve physiotherapy and painkillers but many people end up needing surgery. But the ozone therapy

could help many avoid surgery, the scientists said. In the latest study, the German team treated 327 patients with bulging discs who had not got better on other treatments and were heading for major surgery. After a single injection, 37% reported they were still pain-free six months later. Another third reported less frequent episodes of pain, usually once a day rather than several times earlier.

Scans showed the discs shrunk by between 2% and 15% afterwards, researchers said. "If you reduce the volume, it won't be pushing against the nerve and causing pain," they added. PTI

'Youth ends at 32, old age begins at 54'

London: Aging is all in the mind, it's said. But, a British government survey has now estimated that youth ends at 32 while old age begins at 54.

The survey by the UK's department for work and pensions has claimed that people below 25 believe old age starts sooner than those over the age of 50. Though officially the old age begins at 54, the survey estimated, on average, it says, Britons believe that ripe age starts at 59, while people over 80 believe that youth ends at 52 and old age starts at 68.

According to Steve Webb, the UK's pensions minister, said that attitudes towards age must change due to Britain's rapidly aging population. And, with the retirement age for men and women reaching 66 by 2020, the UK minister said that people must alter their perceptions of when people become "old". Also, the survey, called Attitudes to Age in Britain, found old people have the opposite attitude towards young people. PTI

'Exercise' hormone may help fight obesity, diabetes

Gretchen Reynolds

A newly discovered hormone produced in response to exercise may be turning people's white fat brown, a groundbreaking new study suggests, and in the process lessening their susceptibility to obesity, diabetes and other health problems. The study, published on Wednesday in Nature and led by researchers at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and Harvard Medical School, provides remarkable new insights into how exercise affects the body at a cellular level.

For the study, the researchers studied mouse and human muscle cells. Scientists have believed for some time that muscle cells influence biological processes elsewhere in the body, beyond the muscles themselves. In particular, they have suspected that muscle cells communicate biochemically with body fat.



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IT PAYS TO WORK OUT

But how muscle cells "talk" to fat, what they tell the fat and what role exercise has in sparking or sustaining that conversation have been mysteries — until, in the new study, scientists closely examined the operations of a substance called PGC1-alpha, which is produced in abundance in muscles during and after exercise. NYT NEWS SERVICE

Synthetic windpipe saves cancer patient's life

Henry Fountain

Surgeons in Sweden have replaced the cancerous windpipe of a Maryland man with one made in a laboratory and seeded with the man's cells.

The windpipe, or trachea, made from minuscule plastic fibers and covered in stem cells taken from the man's bone marrow, was implanted in November.

The patient, Christopher Lyles, 30, whose tracheal cancer had progressed to the point where it was considered inoperable, arrived home in Baltimore on Wednesday. It was the second procedure of its kind and the first for an American.

"I'm feeling good," Lyles said in a telephone interview. "I'm just thankful for a second chance at life." He said he hoped to resume his job, as an electrical engineer as soon as he regained full strength. NYT NEWS SERVICE

To shed flab, eat from a red plate

London: Want to shed the flab? Eat from a red plate and drink from a red cup, recommends a new study.

German and Swiss academics claim that using a red plate stops people from eating as much food and using red cups also stops pub-goers from drinking too much alcohol — in fact, it

helps reduce food and drinks consumption by 40%.

They said the colour red may encourage diners to avoid snacking because it is commonly associated with the idea of "danger, prohibition and stop", the Daily Mail reported. The findings mean the government and food industry could

start using red packaging on unhealthy foods as a deterrent — and could even use more red in pubs to prevent people drinking too much.

For the study, researchers recruited 41 male students who were asked to drink tea from cups marked with red or blue labels. The subjects drank 44% less from

cups with red labels.

In the second part, 109 people were given 10 pretzels each on either a red, blue or white plate. Those with a red plate ate fewer pretzels, say the researchers. Ursula Arens at the British Dietetic Association said, "Red may be associated with alarm or something primeval." PTI