

MEDICAL
BRIEFS

Hot weather safety

With summer temperatures soaring, the Wayne County Department of Public Health is advising people to avoid heat-related illnesses. The hot weather can be especially harmful to senior citizens and individuals in poor health.

Exposure to excessive heat can cause hypothermia, a condition where the body is unable to perspire and dissipate heat, said Dr. Donald Lawrenchuk, Wayne County medical director.

Signs of a hypothermic person include: Clammy skin (cold, sticky moisture), headache, dizziness, extreme fatigue and nausea. In extreme cases, a person can suffer a heat stroke that can cause vision impairment, disorientation, loss of consciousness and possibly death.

To avoid heat illness, during extremely hot conditions, you should:

- Limit physical activity to cool morning or evening hours.
- Spend more time in air-conditioned rooms.
- Drink plenty of water for proper hydration.

- Wear lightweight and light-colored clothing.
- Wear a hat and sunglasses to shield yourself from the sun.

If you suspect a person is suffering from a heat crisis, the Health Department recommends:

- Achieve rapid cooling by removing unnecessary clothing.
- Spray the person with lukewarm water and position fans to blow air on the person's body.
- Apply cold compresses to the wrists, ankles, groin, armpits and neck.

- Have the person drink cool water.

"If the person vomits after the intake of fluids, or is confused, get prompt medical attention and continue to rapidly bring down the person's body temperature," Lawrenchuk said.

According to the Health Department, the people most at risk for hypothermia are: Senior citizens, overweight individuals, mental health patients, laborers and athletes.

Breast cancer study

Starfish Family Services is lending assistance to the Barbara Ann Karmanos Cancer Institute in trying to reach women who might qualify for an important research project.

Learning more about heredity, and its role in breast cancer, may lead to improved treatments and prevention. That link is especially important to African-Americans.

Researchers now know that twice as many African-American women are likely to die from breast cancer than white women.

To explore this issue, the Karmanos Institute is conducting a study on family history and breast cancer. Participation in the study simply means being interviewed about family history, thoughts, impressions and feelings about breast cancer. Interviews will take about one hour.

If you are an African-American woman, at least 18 years-old, and have a mother, sister or daughter that has been diagnosed with breast cancer, please call Marjorie Wood at: (313) 745-1699, or 1-800-KARMANOS to request an interview.

Interviews can be conducted at one of the Starfish Family Service location, or at another convenient location. Participants will receive a \$25 stipend. A limited number of appointments are available.

We want your health news

There are several ways you can reach the Observer Health & Fitness staff. The Sunday section provides numerous venues for you to offer newsworthy information including Medical Databook (upcoming calendar events), Medical Newsletters (appointments/new hires in the medical field), and Medical Briefs (medical advances, short news items from hospitals, physicians, companies). We also welcome newsworthy ideas for health and fitness-related stories. To submit an item to our newspaper, you can call, write, fax or e-mail us.

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YOGA

Everything old
is new again...

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Yoga, a 5,000 year-old form of meditation and exercise is back in vogue, and is also getting nods of approval from the medical community.

"I know of at least five students that have come in and said, 'My doctor said I should do yoga,'" said Pam Alexander, who co-founded Simply Yoga in Farmington with business partner Lyle Caillouette. "It is becoming an accepted alternative therapy," she said.

A recent article in *Time* magazine estimated more than 15 million Americans now practice some form of yoga.

"Yoga builds strength and flexibility in the body, activates the endocrine system, improves circulation and incorporates weight bearing postures," Alexander said. "It is a practice — a discipline or scientific method to bring balance to the body."



Poised: Melissa Curnett, co-director of Bikram's Yoga College of India in Plymouth demonstrates "garurasana," eagle pose.

Alexander, and her staff are all RYT's (Registered Yoga Teacher) with the National Yoga Alliance. Mike, 55, who asked his last name be withheld, said he became involved in yoga after three heart attacks and a quadruple bypass. "It really screwed me up."

He credits yoga with his recovery, and is now an RYT at Simply Yoga.

"It's been totally restorative. It has taken me from being frail to feeling like I could leap tall buildings." His family is filled with fatalities from heart disease.

"I am the oldest living male in my family," he said. "It's only because I have been doing yoga for a year-and-a-half that I am normal."

Mike believes that yoga can be practiced by anyone. "It's all about self-acceptance."

Alexander agreed. "You don't have to be a pretzel to do yoga. Every body in class is unique. You also learn to breathe — practicing yoga can increase your breathing by 600 percent."

"There is a growing body of evidence about the psychology of yoga. Yoga is internally oriented — you are looking within to learn self acceptance."

Healing

Charles Deroo has used yoga to recover from injuries he suffered after being struck by a car while cycling in Ann Arbor.

"I was intentionally struck by a drunk driver," he said.

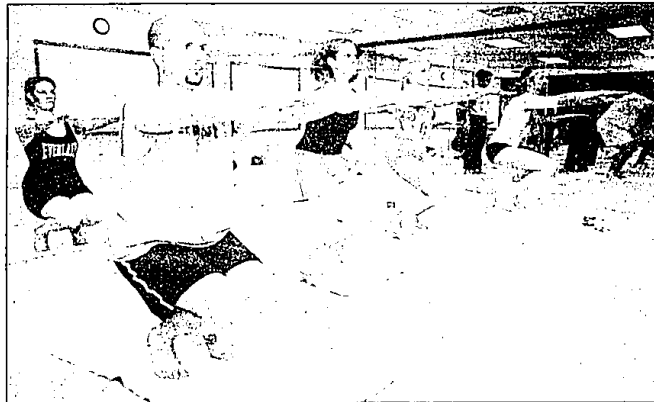
He was seen in the emergency room and diagnosed with a fractured pelvis. Deroo is under the care of an orthopedic surgeon, but he credits yoga for a good part of his recovery.

"I did slow, gentle exercises around the injury, and believe it speeded the healing process," he said.

The competitive cyclist also got an unexpected benefit. "I'm getting about a 10 percent improvement in my performance," Deroo said.

Because it is a weight-bearing exercise, yoga can also be used as a preventative measure for osteoporosis, Alexander said.

Dr. Kalpana Rajdev, a family practice physician and gerontologist at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit,



Concentration: Dennis Szymanski of Brighton and classmates practice "utkatasana" at Bikram's. Yoga This is considered an awkward pose.

said yoga has helped people find relief from chronic ailments like asthma, hypertension, sinusitis, diabetes, and migraines.

She is medical director for the hospital's Continuing Care (nursing home) facilities, and for the hospices of Henry Ford.

"I started learning yoga about 10 years ago," she said. "I have a long, busy day, and it (yoga) makes me so energetic."

Rajdev finds yoga is gaining acceptance with the medical profession. "I think that everybody is beginning to feel there is a legitimate place for it."

However, she laments that many physicians lack personal experience with yoga. "We have an over-reliance on medicines. We should use practices like yoga to stay healthy. I want to implement it in our nursing homes. It improves memory and concentration and combats depression," Rajdev said.

She added, "I would like people to know there is more than one type of yoga." Rajdev practices Sahaja Shithi yoga.

"The type of yoga we are learning is pranayama (breathing). It is very powerful."

Candace Carver, administrative director of the Henry Ford Downriver Center for Oncology, began incorporating yoga into the center's therapies three years ago.

"What we are doing is more of the Hatha yoga. We want people to know that just because you have been diagnosed — it doesn't mean you are going to die."

Carver said yoga is easily adapted, even to patients confined in a wheelchair. "What's most important is that it can be modified. It also helps you to become in touch with your body," she said.

She has seen yoga make a difference in her patients.

"Most positively, we have seen people do things physically that have relieved chronic symptoms,"

Please see YOGA, D7



Balanced: Shelley Keller of Royal Oak, left, and Jenny Barrett of Detroit practice "dandayamana-dhanurasana," standing bow-pulling pose. Barrett is an instructor at Bikram's.