

## MEDICAL BRIEFS

### "Good" cholesterol

After only four weeks into a 12-week study, people who took an investigational drug were able to increase their HDL cholesterol (the "good" cholesterol) levels by 34 percent, according to a recent report in *Circulation: Journal of the American Heart Association*. Also, 198 people lowered their LDL cholesterol (the "bad" cholesterol) by 7 percent.

The drug, called a CETP inhibitor, works by blocking the action of the cholesteryl ester transfer protein, which is known to lower HDL.

"CETP represents an important target because this protein plays a key role in HDL metabolism. In fact, a genetic deficiency of CETP is the main reason for high HDL in Asian populations," says study author Dr. John Kastelein, from the Academic Medical Center in Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

Except for some mild gastrointestinal side-effects, there were no major adverse effects from the new drug.

"Although these results hold promise, further studies are needed to investigate whether the increase in HDL cholesterol translates into a reduction in coronary artery disease risk," says Kastelein.

### American Red Cross

The Southeastern Chapter of the American Red Cross offers the following courses:

■ **Nurse Assistant Training** - Teaches individuals 90 hours of skill and theory that will enable them to provide quality care for residents in long-term care facilities. The program meets the State of Michigan requirements and upon completion, participants take the Michigan Nurse Assistant Aide Competency test for state certification.

■ **Home Health Aide Training** - Teaches the necessary skills to work specifically in a private home care setting. A Patient Care Associate course also is available that teaches the cross-over skills needed to work in various health care settings. The course focuses on trends in health care, EKG, vital signs, venipuncture, respiratory care, dietary needs, basic treatments and adult CPR.

For fee, location and schedule information on health care courses at the Red Cross, please call (313) 576-4130.

### Urinary Incontinence

Doctors at Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak are recruiting women to test an experimental oral medication to determine its effectiveness in reducing the number of stress incontinence episodes. The investigational drug is being tested in women with stress urinary incontinence (SUI), the involuntary loss of urine that occurs if the muscles that support the bladder are weakened, and mixed urinary incontinence (MUI), the involuntary loss of urine as well as a strong urge to urinate. Participants will be compensated. Call (248) 551-0642.

A new treatment for male urinary incontinence is the focus of a clinical research trial at Beaumont Hospital. To be eligible for the study, men must have had prostate surgery. Participation in the study will last at least two years. Potential participants will be given an implant screening, evaluation of past medical history, a physical examination, and urine and bladder function tests. Call Beaumont's Urology Research department at (248) 551-3355.

### Making connections

There are several ways you can reach the Observer Health & Fitness staff. The Sunday section provides numerous venues for you to offer noteworthy information including Medical Database (topping calendar events), Medical Newsletters (appointments/know bins in the medical field), and Medical Briefs (medical advances, short news items from hospitals, physicians, companies). We also welcome noteworthy 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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# Teens & Alcohol

## Early onset drinking predisposes teens to injury, addiction

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Holly Bair, a trauma nurse coordinator at Beaumont Hospital, has seen her share of seriously injured teens and young adults in the emergency room, patients with "multi-system" injuries that involve long-bone fractures, spleen and liver damage, and devastating head trauma.

"It tends to be alcohol-related," she said.

But it's not always car accidents that cause the devastation, she added. "There's skateboarding off the backs of cars and falling off balconies. Things you wouldn't do if you're judgment wasn't impaired."

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism cites research done by the Boston University School of Public Health that reveals

an alarming correlation between early onset drinking and likelihood of injury later in life when under the influence of alcohol. In general, teens who start drinking before age 14 are 12 times more likely to be injured than those who begin drinking at or after age 21.

"This analysis shows that for each year under age 21 that drinking onset is delayed, risk for later life injury diminishes," said Dr. Enoch Gordis, director, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

Research by the National Institutes of Health further indicates the use and abuse of alcohol by adolescents is associated with high-risk behaviors such as drinking and driving, drug abuse, unprotected sexual intercourse, interpersonal violence, destruction of private property, and association with deviant peer groups.

## Teen substance abuse facts

■ Use of alcohol and other drugs is associated with the leading causes of death and injury (motor vehicle crashes, homicides and suicides) among teenagers and young adults.

■ First use of alcohol typically begins around the age 13. Use of marijuana begins around age 14.

■ Children who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcoholism than those who begin at 21.

■ Approximately 8 percent of the nation's 8th graders, 24 percent of 10th graders, and 52 percent of 12th graders have been drunk during the last month.

■ A survey of high school students found that 18 percent of females and 39 percent of males say it is acceptable for a boy to force sex if the girl is stoned or drunk.

■ Researchers estimate that alcohol use is implicated in one- to two-thirds of sexual assaults and acquaintance or "date" rape cases among teens and college students.

■ Teenagers whose parents talk to them regularly about the dangers of drugs are 42 percent less likely to use drugs than those who don't, yet only one in four teens report having these conversations.

Source: Pathway Family Center, Southfield, Mich., (248) 443-0105.



**Counseling:** Dr. David Logan, a psychiatrist and the medical consultant to Growth Works in Plymouth, discusses alcohol use with a young client.

According to NIA statistics, in 1999, 31 percent of 12th grade students, 26 percent of 10th graders, and 15 percent of 8th graders reported high-risk alcohol use (five or more drinks on a single occasion) within the previous two weeks.

As a member of the national organization ENCORE (Emergency Nurses Cancel Alcohol-Related Emergencies), Bair often visits high schools to speak about the dangers of alcohol. She tells students they're not invincible: Drinking can put you into the emergency room and change your life forever. Think before you drink, she warns.

"This is just one moment in your life. Make a smart decision and do it with a clear head."

### Community awareness

Dr. David Logan, psychiatrist and long-time consultant to Growth Works in Plymouth, had a one-word answer when asked if alcohol use by teens is more of a problem than school districts and the community perceive: "Absolutely!"

"It isn't a coincidence that there are more fatal accidents involving teens around graduation time," he said. "But six months later we forget it was alcohol-related. We just miss the kids."

Society's willingness to confront the issue is not what it should be, said Logan. "We look askance, but we don't see the carnage, the destroyed lives, the suicides, the pregnancies."

"The problem is complicated. First of all, there's easy access to alcohol in our affluent society, said Logan. "Teens can go down to the village corner and give \$10 to a college kid and say, 'Buy me a six-pack.'"

Second, parents are almost "a stage behind" in guessing their adolescent's alcohol use.

"If you think your kid is a weekend user, he's probably using all week... If you think they're just on cigarettes, they're usually on alcohol and marijuana also," said Logan. His advice: "Search the kid's room."

Binge-drinking especially has dangerous behavioral associations. The 2000 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse, an annual survey sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, concluded:

■ Underage persons who reported binge drinking (43 percent) were more likely to report past-month use of any illicit drug than were their peers who did not binge drink (6 percent).

Please see DRINKING, C5

## Critical role

## Parents have more influence than they may think



Parents play a critical role in guiding their children's decisions regarding drinking and driving, drug use and sex according to new research conducted by SADD (Students Against Drunk Driving) and Liberty Mutual Group.

The *Teens Today* study results released today reveal that, contrary to the popular "myth of inevitability," such behaviors are not unavoidable

rites of passage in teen life. The *Teens Today* report also suggests strategies that parents can employ to help keep their children safe.

The original research reveals profiles reflecting behavioral trends among teens. Three specific decision types emerged among the 500 teens surveyed, reflecting the degree to which they choose to engage in destructive and potentially destructive activities. These decision types, "avoiders," "experimenters," and "repeaters," were heavily influenced by parental attitudes and behavior.

Avoiders tend to avoid destructive decision-making. Experimenters tend to occasionally engage in destructive

decision-making and repeaters regularly engage in destructive decision-making.

"These findings offer encouragement to parents to continue to talk to their teens about good decision-making," said Stephen Wallace, chairman and chief executive officer of the national SADD organization. "We've shattered the 'myth of inevitability' that so often mirrors parents' attitudes about teen behavior and their uncertainty about being able to influence decision-making."

According to the study, many parents either do not believe that their teen participates in destructive behaviors or think that such behav-

iors are a normal part of rowing up. Many also believe that there is little, if anything, they can do to influence teen choices.

Yet, the data suggests that parents can take an active role in determining which decision-type their teen is likely to resemble. Specifically, the *Teens Today* findings include:

■ Avoiders are more likely than repeaters to say they have open and honest communication with their parents.

■ Teens who have open and honest communication with their parents are more likely than those who do

Please see INFLUENCE, C6