

## MEDICAL BRIEFS

### Way to go, Livonia!

On June 15, over 400 participants gathered at Stevenson High School in Livonia for a 24-hour walk-a-thon in the third annual American Cancer Society Relay For Life. They raised a phenomenal \$38,000, which will be spent by the American Cancer Society on research and fulfilling the needs of local cancer patients and their families.

The team from Livonia Public Schools raised \$9,400, the highest amount of all participating teams. "Relay for Life is our way of giving a group hug to the community. It has such a profound effect on everyone involved," said Donna Clarke, area executive director, American Cancer Society, Great Lakes Division. "The community has truly embraced its partnership with the American Cancer Society, which is the number one reason this Relay continues to be so successful."

### Staying fit

Physical inactivity is associated with many age-related medical conditions, such as high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, obesity and osteoporosis. Sign up for "Forever Fit," an aerobics course offered by St. Mary Mercy Hospital's Senior Health Connection program.

Forever Fit is offered 9-10 a.m. Tuesday and Thursday beginning August 28. The class meets in West Addition B. Each class includes specific exercises for arthritis, range of motion, flexibility, aerobic endurance, strength, balance and relaxation. Music from the past plus words of encouragement will get participants moving.

Pre-registration is required. There is a \$10 registration fee. Call (734) 655-8940 or (800) 494-1650 (out-of-area callers only).

### HIV/AIDS

There are over 36 million people worldwide estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS, and an estimated 22 million people have died since the epidemic began. In the United States, more than 754,000 AIDS cases have been reported, with an estimated 1 million people currently infected with HIV.

The theme of this year's HIV/AIDS Awareness Week, June 25-29, is "Take the Test - Take Control." The Health Department's Wayne Health Center will accept walk-ins 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. for counseling and testing services. The center is located at 33030 Van Born Road near Merriman in Wayne.

The services are free, confidential and anonymous. "This is an all-out drive to get the message out that people need to be tested," says Wayne County Executive Edward H. McNamara. "We are encouraging anyone who has had unprotected sex or anyone who uses drugs or shares needles to get tested for HIV infection."

Studies have shown the virus that causes HIV/AIDS can be transmitted by the following risk behaviors:

- Having sex with an infected partner.
- Having unprotected sexual contact with a high-risk partner.
- Sharing needles and syringes in drug injection.
- Being exposed to blood, semen, vaginal fluids and possibly other body fluids.

For more information on HIV/AIDS and Wayne County Health Department-related services, call (734) 727-7124 or (734) 727-7125.

### 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 Database (upcoming calendar events), Medical Newsmakers (appointments/new hires in the medical field), and Medical Briefs (medical advances, short news items from scientists, 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.

#### ■ CALL US:

(734) 953-2128

#### ■ WRITE US:

Observer & Eclectic Newspapers  
(Specify Database, Newsmakers or Briefs)  
Attn: Renee Skoglund  
36251 Schoolcraft Road  
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#### ■ FAX US:

(734) 953-7279

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# Travel the healthy road

Your bags are packed, the mail is stopped, the dog is boarded - you're ready to hit the road, but...

A recent AAA Michigan survey of state residents aged 45 and older confirms 44 percent have a health condition that impacts their ability to travel. Twenty-six percent have avoided taking a trip in the past due to health concerns. Ranking high on the list of most frequently cited health conditions affecting travel were vision problems, bladder control, heart problems, headaches and digestive disorders.

Hey, Jack, does this mean you can't hit the road? Not at all.

To help spread awareness about key issues surrounding "healthy" travel, AAA Michigan and Pharmacia Corporation have joined forces to launch a year-long, travel-health-education campaign.

The program, called *Travel Healthy, Travel Happy*, features a comprehensive brochure that helps consumers cope with common travel health issues such as motion sickness, arthritis, allergies and diarrhea and overactive bladder.

"It is our hope that this unique travel-health program will provide travelers with important information about how to think ahead and prepare for the everyday health concerns to better ensure a more pleasant travel experience," said Larry Dickens, director of Vendor Relations and Travel Support for AAA Travel.

### Plan ahead

Consider your destination and pack accordingly. Don't forget your sunscreen, insect repellent and bottled water. Take along a small first-aid kit for bumps and bruises and remember to pack all prescription and over-the-counter medications in a waterproof container that is easily accessible in a carry-on bag.

Also, before leaving for a vacation, visit the family doctor to discuss any troubling symptoms that might impact your vacation.

Other "healthy travel" tips:

- **Motion sickness** - When traveling by car, try to sit in the front seat and avoid reading. By boat, sit as close to the middle of the vessel as possible. On a plane, sit near the wing.
- **Digestive problems** - To avoid diarrhea and/or irritable bowel syndrome, avoid stress, caffeine, and certain types of high-fat foods.
- **Allergies** - Those with allergies should take the same precautions on vacation that they do at home. Bring an antihistamine and pack your own pillowcase for use in hotels.
- **Arthritis** - Take frequent breaks to walk around and relieve stiff joints and muscles. Also, pack appropriate medications for pain and inflammation.



### Trip health insurance

Have you every wondered what might happen if the perfectly planned and expensive vacation you prepared gets canceled due to illness?

"You don't have to suffer the financial loss of a non-refundable plane ticket or tour," said Dickens. "Travel insurance is an excellent way to protect your investment."

Travel insurance is relatively inexpensive and can cover trip cancellation, baggage loss, and emergency medical assistance. Trip-cancellation coverage provides compensation for nonrefundable plane tickets, tour packages, or cruise vacations in the event of an illness or injury to you, your family member, a traveling companion, or a traveling companion's family member.

Emergency medical and dental benefits cover expenses, including hospitalization, that occur while you are on vacation. Some providers also offer translators at a 24-hour emergency, multilingual hotline if you are in a foreign hospital. In addition, legal help is available. Check with your local AAA travel agent for details.

To order the free *Travel Healthy, Travel Happy* brochure, or for more information about trip insurance, call 1-800-AAA-MICH (8424) or visit

■ **Overactive bladder** - If you are subject to frequent urination (more than eight times a day) or urgency (an overwhelming urge to urinate), you may have an overactive bladder. See your doctor for treatment options that can make travel easier, or visit [www.bladderinfo.com](http://www.bladderinfo.com)

### Hit the road with healthy snacks

When driving to your summer vacation destination with children in tow, don't throw good nutrition out the window. Reduce the number of fast food stops by planning ahead for road trips.

Registered Dietitian Darlene Zimmerman with the Heart Smart program at the Henry Ford Heart and Vascular Institute, suggests stocking a small cooler with these yummy snacks and drinks:

■ In plastic containers, pack baby carrots, celery sticks and cherry tomatoes to dip in fat-free Ranch dressing.

■ Make your own low-fat snack mix. Try mixing any of the following in sandwich bags: cereal such as Chex, Cheerios, mini shredded wheat, Kix; small pretzels; dried fruit; animal crackers; and raisins. Or try recipes such as the Heart Smart Teddy Bear Snack Mix, Hearty Party Mix or Backpack Granola Bars (found in the Heart Smart Kids Cookbook or at [www.henryford.com](http://www.henryford.com)).

■ To avoid spills, pack juice boxes. Be sure they contain 100 percent fruit juice. ■ Take advantage of roadside fruit and vegetable stands. This allows your family to include fresh fruit and vegetables in their diet and gives the kids a chance to stretch their legs and release some of their pent-up energy.

■ Note that popcorn, carrots and grapes can be a choke-hazard to small children.

Lastly, when on the road, don't substitute snacks for meals. Make sure your itinerary includes a meal stop as close to your normal mealtime schedule as possible. This will prevent hungry, cranky children.

## Infectious disease experts offers tips on roughing it in the bush

Adventure travel isn't what it used to be. Years ago explorers like Columbus and Magellan searched the land looking for royalty. Today, people rough it in the Australian Outback and chase wildlife in Africa for the mere thrill of adventure.

And the popularity of adventure travel is growing. Australia, for example, expects a record year in tourism in 2001.

While it can be fun and daring, adventure travel can pose serious health risks for those who go unprepared.

By taking a few simple health care precautions, however, you can protect yourself against diseases, insect bites, dangerous wildlife, food and sun poisoning, unsanitary living conditions and other physical elements, says Dr. Noe Mateo, senior staff physician in the Division of Infectious Diseases at Henry Ford Hospital.

"If you're going to live off the land, you have to do your homework and figure out your resources," he says. "Or, you can get good and friendly with the natives."

Consider:

■ **Diseases**: For most countries no immunizations are necessary. But the farther you go off the

beaten path, Mateo recommends getting a hepatitis A vaccination. Hepatitis A is transmitted by contaminated food and drinking water, and by poor sanitation conditions. The vaccine provides long-term immunity after an initial injection and a booster at six months.

■ **Pre-existing medical conditions**: If you have diabetes, hypertension or some other medical condition that requires daily medication, determine whether special storage is required due to the heat and the cold.

Women of child-bearing age who have missed one or two consecutive menstrual cycles should receive a pregnancy test, especially if traveling more than four weeks. Bleeding from a potential miscarriage could pose significant health risks.

■ **Insect bites**: DEET-based repellents work most effectively against mosquitoes, bees, wasps and flies. Separate sprays are available for skin and clothing application. And don't be shy when it comes to applying it. "If you have so much as a dime-sized portion of skin that hasn't been covered, mosquitoes will find it," says Mateo. "How do I know this? Personal experience. And it's been written up in medical journals."

■ **Wildlife**: Contestants on *Survivor*: The Australian Outback were exposed to deadly snakes, spiders and lizards. Avoid them at all costs, says Mateo. "Scorpions like to hide in the warm, snug-gling places, so empty your shoes before you put them on." To treat a snake bite, bind the wound tightly and seek immediate medical care.

■ **Sun and food poisoning**: Because the temperature in tropical rain forests and the Australian Outback can reach more than 100 degrees, a hat and sunscreen with 15+ SPF is necessary. Eating raw food is ill-advised. "If you're out in the bush and eating meat that's not cooked, you're just asking for trouble," says Mateo.

When it comes to water, always assume the worst. If in doubt, don't drink it. The simplest way to ensure your safety is to boil it. You also can pack a water filtering system (prices range from \$20-\$130). "It might not taste that great, but it's filtered water," says Mateo.

■ **De-worming**: If you've spent more than two weeks living off the land, Mateo says it's a good idea to get a medical check-up, complete with blood and skin tests, after returning home.