

MEDICAL  
BRIEFS

## Respiratory studies

The Michigan Respiratory Health and Research Institute in Novi seeks volunteers for studies about asthma, nasal problems and allergies.

■ **Adult and adolescent volunteers** for the asthma study must be at least 12 years old. They must be healthy nonsmokers with moderate asthma symptoms (cough, wheeze, shortness of breath) controlled by inhaled medications.

■ **Volunteers for the nasal study** must be 16 to 85 with year-round nasal allergy symptoms (stuffy or runny nose; sneezing; itchy eyes, nose or throat; watery or red eyes).

■ **Volunteers for the asthma study**, which involves an investigational antibiotic, must be at least 18 years old. They must have acute maxillary sinusitis for at least seven days, but not more than 28 days, including at least one of these symptoms: facial pain or pressure; colored, thick nasal discharge or post-nasal drip; toothache. Study subjects will have an x-ray of their sinuses after the first visit and after completing their study treatment.

Individuals who qualify for the studies will receive office visits, limited testing and investigational study medications at no cost, plus compensation for participation in the study. For more information, call Julie at (248) 473-6400 or (800) 326-6959.

## Breast cancer study

Postmenopausal women with an increased risk of developing breast cancer can take part in a national research study at Beaumont Hospital that will compare the effectiveness of two drugs in preventing breast cancer.

Volunteers will either take tamoxifen, a drug approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to reduce the incidence of breast cancer in women at increased risk, or raloxifene, which is approved by the FDA for treating osteoporosis and has shown promise in reducing a woman's chance of getting breast cancer.

## \$1 million gift

Ford Motor Co. has pledged \$1 million to Saint Joseph Mercy Health System of Ann Arbor for its Campaign for Women's Health. The grant ensures that SJMHS will reach its fund-raising goal of \$13.5 million, the largest ever in the health system's history, and helps the health system satisfy a challenge grant from the Kresge Foundation.

The Women's Health Center will focus primarily on preventive health care and will offer educational programs and health services to women of all ages.

## Flu shots

Roll up your sleeves and get ready to be poked! Garden City Hospital will offer flu shots at its Harrison facility at the following times:

- 1-7 p.m. Monday, Dec. 17
- 4-7 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 18
- 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 20

■ The Harrison facility is located at 701 Harrison, between Maplewood and Warren and between Inkster and Middlebelt. There will be a \$7 charge. Medicare billing for senior citizens will be available. Appointments are necessary. Call (734) 468-4330.

## 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 Notebook (upcoming calendar events), Medical News (appointments/new hires in the medical field), and Medical Briefs (medical advances, short news items from hospitals, physicians, companies). We also welcome short news items 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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## If the shoe fits.....

Put some heart and 'sole' into the purchase of new shoes



BY LAURIE HUMPHREY  
SPECIAL WRITER

If donning a good pair of shoes is not a routine part of your holiday hustle, maybe it should be, warn local podiatrists. The following are some helpful tips to achieve shoe nirvana.

Dr. Lawrence Tyner of St. Joseph Mercy Hospital admits that too many people buy shoes based on how they look rather than how they feel. This practice can result in sore or even damaged feet for people who spend a lot of time on their feet. (Holiday shoppers take note.)

"Nobody looks at shoes from the bottom. They look from the top," said the Ypsilanti/Ann Arbor-based podiatrist.

While most people at least try to match up the length and width of the shoe to their foot, few people take into account the "last" of the shoe, Tyner said. The "last" of a shoe is the form on which the shoe is made. It may be straight or curved, and it dictates the overall shape of the shoe.

To determine the shape of the last, according to information from PodiatryNetwork.com, turn the shoe over and look at the sole. Imagine a line that goes through the center of the heel and then out the center of the toe area. In curved-lasted shoes — and this is especially true in athletic shoes — this imaginary line is in the shape of a curve, usually curving inward. In straight-lasted shoes, the line will be straight from heel to toe.

In your foot form straight, slightly curved, or very curved? If you don't know, Tyner recommends that you use a mirror to look at the bottom of your feet. These results, combined with the profile of your feet, should dictate which type of shoes you buy. Straight-footed people should choose straight-lasted shoes.

Keep in mind that curve-lasted shoes can cause problems, such as excessive amounts of pressure on the outside of the foot. This can lead to bone spurs in the fifth toe, soft corns between fourth and fifth toe and tailors bunions.

## Doctor's recommendation

People with flat feet should look for a shoe with good support. For athletic shoe shoppers, Tyner recommends Brooks or New Balance. For those with a high arch, he suggests athletic shoe shoppers look at Nike Air.

"This is a cushioned shoe, very shock absorbing," he said.

Dr. Murray Kahn, a Henry Ford Hospital podiatrist based in Livonia, goes one step further when advising his patients. He suggests bringing the appropriate type of sock when shoe shopping, walking around in the shoes for 10 minutes, shopping in

the afternoon because feet are thinner in the morning, and keeping in mind you'll likely get what you pay for.

"The \$20 (athletic) shoes tend to be vinyl, hard and trap moisture and heat, which will make the wearer susceptible to athlete's foot," Kahn said. "You want to get leather or mesh material."

PodiatryNetwork.com offers the following suggestions when selecting an athletic shoe:

■ If your foot is fairly straight, choose a straight-lasted athletic shoe.

■ Choose a shoe with a rigid heel for stability.

■ Look for a shoe that is fairly flexible in the forefoot. If the shoe does not easily flex in the forefoot then as the heel comes off the ground during walking and running the big toe is unable to flex properly.

■ Place the shoe on a flat surface. The heel should be relatively perpendicular to the surface. If the back of the shoe is angled in either direction it could indicate a defect in manufacturer of the shoe.

## Go for comfort

Many of Kahn's female patients are in their mid-to-late 40s. "They have gone through the high-heel, stylish period of the life. Now they want something that is comfortable and looks good," he said.

When it comes to dress shoes, Tyner suggests men look at Johnson & Murphy while women look at Naturalizer.

## Rules to shoe shop by

■ Don't buy flats.

■ Shop in the afternoon when feet tend to expand.

■ Bring appropriate socks.

■ For flat feet, buy athletic shoes with good heel support.

■ For high arches, buy athletic shoes with shock absorbers.

■ People with diabetes should buy shoes with extra depth, such as Drew.

■ People with bunions and calluses should buy shoes with a wide and high toe box, such as Free Time.

"For the money, they (Naturalizer) have the best," he said.

Consumer-turned-employee Geraldine Branford, a saleswoman at Naturalizer in Westland Mall, agrees. Her opinion is not based solely on her job but also on the circumstances that led to her getting the job.

"I was out looking for comfortable shoes because I had just had foot surgery," said Branford, a three-year employee. She got along so well with the Naturalizer salesman helping her, who happened to be the manager, that he asked her to sell the product she felt confident buying.

Naturalizer shoes reflect the philosophy of podiatrists in their design. Heels are 1" to 1 1/2" high, chunky and stable versus stiletto and unstable. Furthermore, many designs come with removable orthotics or extra width for women with corns or bunions, a common problem for women who wear heels.

"Some people walk in, try the shoes on and just want to walk out in them," said Branford, who has been trained to measure feet and help customers find shoes based upon their medical needs and fashion preferences.

It's up to consumers to keep their feet in good shape, not shoe makers, said Kahn.

"They have to make shoes for millions of people, and no two feet are the same. Even the left foot is different than the right foot."

## Wear patterns

Aside from comfort levels, wear patterns provide another way to determine whether the shoes people are wearing are right for them. The underside of the shoe should reflect a proper foot roll.

"If you hit on the outside of the heel and wear off the big toe, that's good. If you hit on the inside of the heel or forefoot, that can cause calluses or pinched nerves."

For Tyner, it's just common sense. "You go with what feels comfortable and right, not with what looks good."

Before buying anything, he suggests shoe shoppers check a shoe's stability in three places: 1) torsion (use the two ends to twist the shoe back and forth), 2) the middle, and 3) the heel counter (use thumb and forefinger to check heel.) Since shoes that are completely flat often fail to offer the needed stability in all three areas, both doctors advise women stay away from those fashion shoes known as "flats."

Although "flats" tend to be cheaper, Tyner said "if you try to get away with cheap shoes, it'll cost you more in the long run."

## Higher blood pressure in youth means thicker arteries

Teenagers with the highest blood pressure and extra pounds had thicker arteries by age 30, according to the American Heart Association.

Hypertension is one of the main risk factors for atherosclerosis in adults, but because obesity is strongly related to hypertension, researchers also studied the impact of body mass index (a height-to-weight ratio) on the relationship between adolescent blood pressure and artery thickness in young adulthood.

"Prevention of early atherosclerosis in artery walls may depend on keeping boys and girls from becoming overweight as adolescents, or helping them lose excess weight if they are already obese," said Dr. Lydia E. Vos, a research fellow in the department of clinical epidemiology at University Medical Center in Utrecht, Netherlands.

Using blood pressure readings obtained from public school health records in the city of Utrecht, the researchers tracked 245 healthy men and women and examined their carotid arteries (the main blood vessels supplying the brain). Initial blood pressure

measurements were taken when participants were about 13 years old.

Age, body size and the degree of sexual maturation determine blood pressure levels in adolescence. Heavier and more sexually mature teenagers had higher blood pressure.

Researchers examined the participants again when they were age 27-30 years old and measured the innermost layers of their carotid arteries, called the intima and media. The measurement, called carotid intima media thickness, reflects the severity of a person's atherosclerosis. The average CIMT was 0.61 millimeters. Researchers wanted to determine if there was a link between blood pressures in youth and atherosclerosis in young adulthood.

## Findings

An increase of 10 millimeters of mercury in systolic blood pressure (the top number in a blood pressure reading) was associated with a 7.7-micrometer increase in CIMT, suggesting that healthy young adolescents with a higher blood pressure develop thicker vessel walls by young adulthood.

However, when body mass index at adolescence was taken into account, the effect of teen blood pressure on the arteries was not as strong: The 10-mmHg increase in systolic blood pressure was associated with only a 2.9-micrometer increase in CIMT.

This finding shows that high body mass index at adolescence had the strongest impact on the blood pressure-CIMT association, said Vos. The preliminary results showed that the correlation was the same among both male and female study subjects.

"This shows a clear relationship between overweight and higher blood pressure in adolescents and CIMT in young adulthood," she said.

Thus, maintaining a lower or normal body mass index during adolescence may improve children's future cardiovascular health, Vos concluded.

The teenagers' average systolic blood pressure was 110 mmHg, and the average diastolic blood pressure was 65 mmHg. Their average height was 1.63 meters (about 5 feet 4 inches), and the average weight was 50.3 kilograms (about 110 pounds).