

## HEALTH

## AHA JOURNAL BRIEFS:

**Blood clot signals likelihood artery may re-narrow after angioplasty**

Researchers at Rotterdam's Erasmus University recently reported successful use of drug-coated metal coils called "stents" to keep coronary arteries clear after balloon angioplasty, the catheter procedure to reopen blocked vessels. Now Erasmus scientists say they've identified a group of angioplasty patients whose arteries are most likely to become relogged and thus might benefit from the new stints or other clot-prevention measures.

Scientists studied X-ray images (angiograms) of 2,950 patients' arteries immediately before and after balloon angioplasty and at six months

follow-up. They found that a "significantly" higher rate of restenosis (re-narrowing) developed in arteries in which a clot had been visible in the treated area either just before or just after the procedure.

The restenosis rate was 43% in vessels having a visible clot vs. 34% in those without a clot. The higher rate was primarily due to "occlusions," or artery blockages, which were seen at follow-up in 13.8% of the group with clots, but in only 5.7% of those without clots. The Dutch research team reported its findings in the March 1 issue of the American Heart Association scientific journal *Circulation*.

**Mental stress, nervous system combine to affect blood pressure**

A combination of mental stress and hypertensive parents may breed episodes of high blood pressure, report Swiss scientists. Georg Noll, M.D., and his colleagues at University Hospital in Bern, assessed muscle sympathetic nerve activity in 10 young adult children of parents with essential hypertension (high blood pressure of unknown origin) and compared them with similar measurements from eight children of parents with acceptable blood pressure. Nervous system activity was assessed at rest, during a 10-minute period in which the subjects breathed a low-oxygen mixture and during a three-minute mental stress test.

While at rest nervous system

activity was actually lower in the children of hypertensive parents. However, periods of mental stress raised nervous system activity significantly in these individuals. These same subjects also showed significant increases in blood levels of norepinephrine and endothelin during mental stress. Both chemicals act to constrict blood vessels; constricted vessels help raise blood pressure. Responses to breathing a low-oxygen mixture was similar in the two groups, the scientists report in the March 1 issue of the AHA journal *Circulation*. "These early functional changes of central and local cardiovascular regulation may be important in the pathogenesis of high blood pressure," they write.

**Helping a child through a natural disaster**

HOUSTON — Parents can help children through natural disasters by providing three things: predictability, nurturance and structure.

"One-third of all children experiencing a natural disaster will develop post-traumatic stress disorder," said Dr. Bruce D. Perry, director of the CIVITAS Child Trauma Programs at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston.

Perry states that loss of home or threat to life doubles the risk. "Children react to the anxiety

of the adults around them," he said. "They feel vulnerable when they see that their parents are powerless."

Often very young children may feel they may have caused the disaster to occur because of their behavior or bad thoughts, Perry says.

"Give age-appropriate information about the cause of the disaster, the true risk and any changes in the life of the child," he said. "Children need to understand that natural

disasters do not happen often and are usually a once-in-a-lifetime thing."

Information and reassurance must be given multiple times to reinforce the message.

"Reassure children that although their home may be damaged they are still part of a family," Perry said. "If you must evacuate, let children take familiar items or some part of the home with them."

During a disaster, all children experience a set of normal responses to the threat.

"This is the body's way of protecting itself," Perry said. "Children's heart rates increase, their attention level changes as they tune out things not essential to survival, and they often appear numb to their surroundings."

**PACKING TWICE THE PUNCH****Oatmeal is excellent source of both soluble and insoluble fiber**

Mom always said that oatmeal was good for you. Thirty years of science has shown there were many grains of truth to her advice. Today we know that a warm, tasty bowl of oatmeal starts your day with a boost of whole grain goodness that sticks to your ribs. Why? One big reason is that oatmeal is one food that's an excellent source of fiber.

We've heard a lot about fiber but, did you know, there are actually two kinds of fiber—soluble and insoluble. And they have different health benefits. "Consumers should be aware that all fiber is not the same," said C. Wayne Callaway, M.D., P.C. of George Washington University. "Insoluble fiber may reduce the risk of intestinal disorders and improves regularity. Soluble fiber is the most effective type of fiber for lowering cholesterol levels and helping your heart."

While other grains such as wheat, corn and rice contain mostly insoluble fiber, only oats has a significant amount of soluble fiber as well. Three decades of research have found that, if your cholesterol is high or borderline high, oatmeal can help. These studies have shown a link between diets that contain the soluble fiber in oatmeal and a reduction in both total cholesterol and low-density lipids (LDL or "bad" cholesterol).

After reviewing the 30 years of science on oatmeal's ability to lower cholesterol, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently proposed to allow, for the first time, a health claim for a specific food. It would read: *Eating oat bran or oatmeal daily as part of a low saturated fat and low cholesterol diet may reduce heart disease risk.* "Heart disease is the No. 1 cause of

Although normal routines may be disrupted, parents can reinforce stability by implementing some regular routines. "Re-establish your child's schedule for eating, play and bedtime," he said.

Children may have recurring thoughts or nightmares about the event, and they may act out the trauma in their drawings or play. "Over time the thoughts should be less intense," Perry said.

If symptoms persist for more than a couple of months or if they are severe within the first week, parents should seek therapy for their child.

"The quicker the community can get back to normal, the less mental health risk to children and adults," Perry said.

**A Winning Diet**

(NAPS) — Even if you don't play football, swim or jog, your body needs a nutritious, balanced diet to fuel it.

Good nutrition, like any sporting event, has basic ground rules. Following these rules and getting plenty of rest and practice can help you feel great and score those winning points!

• Every day, eat a variety of foods such as grains, vegetables, fruits, beans, lean meats and low fat dairy products. The base of a nutritious diet should come from carbohydrates in the form of starches and sugars.

Before you exercise or compete, eat high carbohydrate foods such as bananas, bagels and fruit juices. These foods are broken down quickly and provide glucose to the muscles. During a game or match, drink at least half a cup of cool water for every 20 minutes you exercise.

After a workout, eat foods that are high in carbohydrates to refuel.

• Always drink a lot of fluids. You can make a homemade sports drink by mixing no more than 4 teaspoons of sugar, 1/4 teaspoon of salt and some flavoring, like a teaspoon of lemon juice, to 8 ounces of water.

• Extra servings of protein in foods and protein substitutes do not assist in muscle development. Unlike carbohydrates, protein cannot be stored in the body and any excess will either be burned as energy or stored as body fat.

For a free brochure called *Winning Nutrition for Athletes*, write: The Sugar Association, Inc., 1101 15th Street, NW, Suite 600, Washington, D.C. 20005.

**AFRICAN-AMERICAN HEALTH BRIEFS****BLACK MEN DON'T HAVE TO BE STATISTICS**

HOUSTON — One in nine U.S. black men will develop prostate cancer, and one in three will be hit by hypertension. Forty-five thousand blacks will die annually from smoking-related diseases.

The tragedy is that all three are largely preventable or, if caught early, easily treated, said Dr. James L. Phillips of Baylor College of Medicine in Houston.

Black men older than 40 should get prostate examinations and learn to recognize symptoms of benign prostatic hyperplasia, or prostate enlargement: urinary hesitancy, severe urinary urgency, weak urinary flow, frequent nocturnal

urination.

Hypertension, or high blood pressure, can be fatal if left untreated. Key steps to take: lowering salt intake, losing weight (if overweight), exercising regularly.

Smokers can seek help from smoking-cessation groups, support groups, hypnosis, acupuncture, nicotine gum, nicotine patches — whatever works for an individual, Phillips said.

These steps can help keep black men from becoming statistics.

**THERE'S A NEED FOR BLACK ORGAN DONORS**

HOUSTON — The black community is suffering from a

(See Briefs, Page 6)

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