

HEALTH BRIEFS

CAR SEATS CAN HELP WITH MOTION SICKNESS

Car seats can help children who are prone to motion sickness. Motion sickness can be caused by the difference between what the eyes see and what the body senses, said Dr. Ellen M. Friedman, an otorhinolaryngologist at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. "By elevating the car seats so that children can look out the window, they can see the direction of travel their bodies are experiencing," Friedman said. Traveling at night can also help reduce motion sickness because there is less visual stimulation at night. It can also be helpful to have children close their eyes or wear dark glasses.

HEART PATIENTS: CAUTION WHEN TRAVELING

If you're suffering from heart disease and your condition is unstable, you should carefully weigh the risks of foreign travel against possible aggravation of your condition. "An increase in underlying angina, shortness of breath, edema and other similar complaints might mean you should consider delaying the trip," said Dr. Wayne J. Riley, director of Travel Medicine Service at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. This is especially true if the trip is overseas or to a high elevation. For heart-disease patients who do travel to foreign countries, Riley recommends carrying an adequate supply of cardiac medicine and never assuming that your type of medicine will be available aboard. Carry your drugs with you rather than in your luggage, which could be lost. Also, keep your medicines in their original containers to lessen the chance of confiscation at certain border crossings.

BE CAREFUL WITH INSULIN WHEN TRAVELING

Insulin-dependent diabetics should be careful with their insulin when traveling. Do not put in the glove compartment or trunk of a vehicle, said Dr. Wayne J. Riley, director of the Travel Medicine Service at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. Doing so can result in insulin deterioration if the vehicle is exposed to extremely low or extremely high temperatures. Specially designed insulator packs are the best means for transporting insulin on a trip, Riley said. If your destination is a hot climate, a cooler pack is also advisable. Once you arrive at your destination, transfer the insulin to a refrigerator.

BAYLOR OFFERS MEDICAL PROGRAM

College students interested in medical careers may apply for the Honors Premedical Academy, a six-week summer program at Baylor College of Medicine and Rice University, both in Houston. The program, funded in part by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, aims to make the participants more competitive in the medical school applicants' pool. Students earn nine hours. They are paired with Baylor physicians in the mornings and take afternoon science and communications classes at Rice. Tuition and housing are free. Applicants must have completed one year of college biology. They must have at least a 3.0 overall grade-point average and a 2.75 GPA in the sciences. Additional information is available by calling 1-800-798-8244. The application deadline is April 1, 1998.

OBESE BLACK TEENS: EXAMINE HEALTH RISKS

Many overweight black teens do not realize obesity is a health risk, according to a Baylor medical official. "They know they have a weight problem, but they don't think of the health consequences," said Dr. John Foreyt, a weight-control expert at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. Studies show that only 40 percent of obese black females and 36 percent of the males perceived themselves as heavy. Adolescence is a critical time in the development of adult obesity. Eighty percent of obese teenagers are likely to grow into overweight adults, Foreyt said. It is important to educate teens about the health risks of obesity, he said.

COLORECTAL CANCER HIGH AMONG BLACKS

Although colorectal cancer deaths have declined for whites, there has been an increase among black men. But proper nutrition and early detection can reduce colorectal-cancer deaths in all people, including blacks. "A first step is diet," said Dr. John I. Hughes of Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. "Preparing high-fiber foods instead of fried and other fatty foods may lessen the risk." Only one in 10 of all Americans eats the recommended daily allowance of fruits and vegetables, according to the National Cancer Institute; blacks appear to eat even less. Colorectal-cancer warning signs include: Rectal pain or bleeding; Bloody stools or frequent narrow stools; changes in bowel habits or a feeling of incomplete emptying after bowel movements; and unexplained weight loss, paleness and fatigue.

HEALTH

Old makeup can cause serious eye infections

Special to Sentinel-Voice

HOUSTON — Cosmetics designed to give women an eye-opening appearance can harbor bacteria, which can cause serious eye infections.

"Eyelashes naturally have bacteria on them and as soon as you use a makeup brush on the eyelash or eyelid, the brush is contaminated," said Dr. Alice Matoba, associate professor of ophthalmology at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston and attending physician at The Methodist Hospital.

Over time, this leads to a buildup of bacteria in the cosmetics container, increasing the chance for an eye infection

or an allergic reaction with each use of the product.

"Particles of makeup can land in the eyes and cause redness and irritation," Matoba said. "More serious, potentially sight-threatening infections can result if the surface of the eye is scratched with a contaminated brush or makeup pencil."

Most cosmetics have long shelf lives, but since they can be contaminated with bacteria after only one use, it is a good idea to keep track of how long you have been using products such as mascara and eyeliners.

"While there are no guidelines for cosmetics use, risk of infection can be

reduced if you change them out every three to four months," Matoba said.

Also, avoid sharing cosmetics.

Cross contamination occurs when two or more people use the same brushes or eyeliners. The primary danger with sharing makeup is passing on an infection, such as viral conjunctivitis or pink eye.

"Exposure to even a small amount of virus can lead to a very uncomfortable infection," she said.

If you experience symptoms of a viral infection, including discharge, swelling of the eyelids or inflammation of the white of the eye, an exam by an ophthalmologist is recommended.

Parents: Children may suffer from chronic diarrhea

Special to Sentinel-Voice

HOUSTON — Many parents may not realize their children are suffering from chronic "non-specific" diarrhea.

"A child suffering from this type of diarrhea will have loose stools for a long period of time, but otherwise is perfectly healthy," said Dr. Carlos Lifschitz at the USDA/ARS Children's Nutrition Center at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston.

"It usually strikes children at age 1 year and can sometimes last until age 3," Lifschitz said.

Chronic "non-specific" diarrhea is defined as any increase in the number of bowel movements per day and increase in

the water content of the stool lasting more than 25 days. It's "non-specific" because it has no particular cause.

Children need plenty to drink during the summer months, but excessive amounts of water or fruit juice can contribute to chronic "non-specific" diarrhea.

"Many times parents will give more liquids to a child suffering with this type of diarrhea to prevent dehydration," said Lifschitz, an associate professor of pediatrics at Baylor College of Medicine. "More fluids equals more liquid stools, and you create a vicious cycle."

However, parasites can also cause

diarrhea and children may need to be tested. The best way to stop chronic "non-specific" diarrhea is to decrease the amount of fluids.

"It usually takes two or three days to determine if the fluids are contributing to the diarrhea," Lifschitz said. "Some popular fruit juices contain combinations of sugars which make them less absorbable. The less absorbable a sugar is the more water will be attracted to the gut, leading to diarrhea."

Lifschitz says parents may have to deal with cranky children when they take away their favorite drinks, but it will be worth it in the long run.

Dr. Joye Carter: Female forensics role model

Special to Sentinel-Voice

HOUSTON — When Joye Carter viewed an autopsy as a high-school student in Indianapolis, she knew where her life was headed.

And, as the first female chief medical examiner in Houston, Carter, now a medical doctor, has added another notch to her belt in a highly successful career.

About a year ago, Carter came to Houston from Washington, D.C., where she had also served as chief medical examiner. Her professional career has also included time as a major in the U.S. Air Force Medical Corps, where she served as chief physician and forensic pathologist.

"There are no routine days," said Carter, a clinical associate professor of pathology at Houston's Baylor College of Medicine. "What I particularly like is the satisfaction in being able to search for the truth. My job is to be honest, and I like being able to do that."

She finds it fascinating to

gather facts and put together the puzzle pieces that explain a person's death. And she enjoys knowing that the information she gathers is of help to the living.

"I think it's important that, if you know something, you share it so you can help people live. A lot of what we do can be used to prevent unnecessary deaths as well as help physicians who treat the living to treat them better," Carter said.

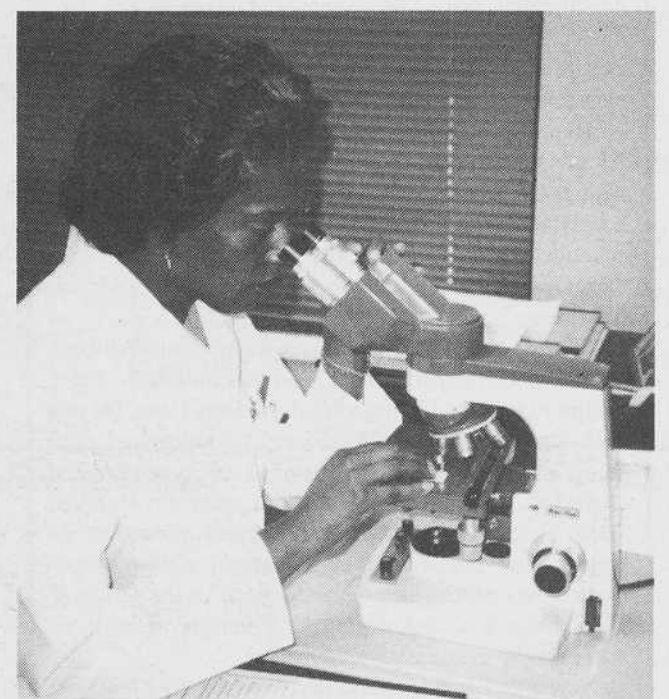
Carter is one of only a few female medical examiners in the United States.

"When I first went into this field," she said, "it's not like anyone tried to stop me, but they did later on."

By then, however, Carter already was hooked on forensics as a career.

"Some people didn't think women had the ability to do this kind of work," she said. "They thought we were too weak."

Dr. Joye Carter has proven them wrong.



DR. JOYE CARTER

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