

TRAVEL BRIEFS

TYPHOID FEVER IS A PROBLEM IN SOME AREAS

Typhoid fever can be a problem in many areas of the world. Typhoid fever is a bacterial infection of the gastrointestinal tract acquired through food or drink contaminated with human fecal material, said Dr. Wayne J. Riley, director of the Travel Medicine Service at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. Often it results from eating food prepared by a carrier of the disease. There are vaccines available for typhoid fever, but they are not 100 percent effective. "You're generally safe if you eat and drink within the international hotel circuit," Riley said, "but, outside of that, exercise caution by following the rule of 'cook it, boil it, peel it or don't eat it.'"

HYPOTHERMIA CAN BE A DANGER IN COLDER AREAS

If you're headed for a vacation in cold climates, beware of hypothermia. Hypothermia occurs when the core body temperature falls lower than 98.6 degrees, and it can occur in the very young and the very old even in relatively mild cold weather. Symptoms include slurred or incoherent speech, violent shivering and a drop in awareness level, said Dr. Wayne J. Riley, director of the Travel Medicine Service at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. "Do not use rough treatment such as vigorous rubbing or rapid re-warming," Riley said. "This can further strain the body's ability to cope." Instead, change cold, damp clothing, and place the person between thick blankets until professional medical help arrives.

AVOIDING AIDS IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

Compared to many other infectious diseases, AIDS is not particularly contagious, and thus it is fairly easily avoided, even in countries in which the disease is rampant. The virus that causes AIDS is transmitted primarily through blood or semen, said Dr. Wayne J. Riley, director of the Travel Medicine Service at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. The major risks involve sharing of infected needles, transfusion of contaminated blood or certain kinds of sexual contact with infected people. In developing countries, avoid injections, dental procedures or skin-piercing activities, Riley said. If a medical condition, such as diabetes, requires regular injections, carry your own needles along with a letter from your physician. Also, avoid risky sexual behavior, particularly condom-less sex, and blood transfusions that are not absolute life-saving measures.

New study examines ethnic growth differences

Special to Sentinel-Voice

HOUSTON — The second phase of a multi-ethnic body composition study of young children examines the genetic and environmental factors that influence growth.

More than a thousand children, ages 3 to 18, took part in the first part of the study, being conducted at the USDA/ARS Children's Nutrition Research Center at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. Researchers found differences among ethnic groups in bone and muscle growth starting during the pre-puberty years, which was clearly evident by age 12.

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"African-American children were found to have higher muscle and bone mass than whites."

— Dr. Kenneth Ellis, Baylor College of Medicine

than whites," said Dr. Kenneth Ellis, a professor of pediatrics at Baylor College of Medicine. "We believe this may be a genetic difference and may help tell us why more whites than blacks suffer from osteoporosis later in life."

"We found that Hispanic and white children, in terms of bone and tissue mass, were almost identical," Ellis said.

"However, Hispanics did have a higher incidence of obesity and a higher percentage of body fat."

Special to Sentinel-Voice

A nasal influenza spray is safe and effective in preventing flu in children, say researchers at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston and nine other U.S. sites.

The result is a breakthrough in the battle to immunize children against flu without the fear or pain of a shot. Only one percent of the 1,070 children who received the nasal vaccine in the national trials developed culture-confirmed influenza during last year's flu season versus 18 percent of the 532 same-age children who

received placebos.

"This spray could well have widespread public-health implications," said Dr. Pedro A. Piedra, a pediatrician in Baylor's Influenza Research Center and an attending physician at Texas Children's Hospital, also in Houston.

"We recognize that children are major carriers of flu," he said. "Every year influenza sweeps through schools, and the children take it home to their parents."

Because this new vaccine is more easily administered, it could help control flu in school-

age populations and thus control it in the adult population, Piedra said.

The large field trial enrolled 1,602 children from 15 months of age to 6 years. The Baylor portion of the trial was conducted primarily at Houston-area Kelsey-Seybold clinics.

The study targeted healthy young children because they experience the highest incidence of influenza and are an important source of its spread. Most children have had flu two or three times by the age of 5.

The new vaccine, made from weakened virus, cannot cause influenza. It is designed to stimulate antibodies in the upper airways that protect against naturally acquired infection.

Influenza affects as many as 50 million people a year in the United States, mostly between late fall and early spring. More than 20,000 people, most of them elderly, die annually from flu and its complications.

An estimated \$4.6 billion is spent each year on direct medical costs related to flu.

Rekindling feelings helps couples solve problems

Special to Sentinel-Voice

HOUSTON — Existing feelings of attachment can help couples weather marital distress, according to a Houston social worker.

"Communication, children, finances and sex are the most common causes of conflict," said Bob Beck, a clinical social worker and couples therapist at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. "However, if there is still some sense of attachment and a shared vision for the future, the couples can make it."

Beck encourages couples to sit together and review courtship and wedding photos. These mementos can help couples focus on their early

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hopes for the future and on what they loved and cared about when they were first together.

The next step in resolving conflict is to start listening to each other.

"The essence of working things out is hearing one another and accepting what the other person has to say," Beck said. "Only then can you begin to understand what is important

to your partner and work toward some type of mutual agreement."

Some ground rules for conflict resolution include:

- Talking through problems to mutual satisfaction rather than getting frustrated and giving up. Realize it may take several discussion sessions.

- Creating an environment conducive to discussion — no television, no children needing attention.

- Being willing to listen to the other person's viewpoint.

- Entering the discussion with an open mind and the ability to accept another opinion.

Couples can often solve problems on their own, but if not, Beck recommends seeking professional help.

"Do not seek advice from your friends. They are often too close to the relationship or may have an allegiance to one of you," Beck said. "Rely on friends simply for support."

Beck encourages couples to find a counselor licensed by the State Board of Examiners in Marriage and Family Therapy or one who is a member of the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapy. Couple therapists can be found at community agencies and clinics, at hospital out-patient clinics or in private practice.

"The most important ingredient is a good 'fit' between couple and therapist. If you cannot work comfortably with the therapist, then shop around for another," Beck said.

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