

Health & Science

Hale-Bopp seen from eyes of space shuttle

Astronauts also find evidence supporting theory that snowballs the size of a house are pelting Earth's atmosphere

Space shuttle Discovery's astronauts are taking more and better pictures of the Hale-Bopp comet with a small ultraviolet telescope.

The astronauts are using a window-mounted telescope, and scientists said the images of Hale-Bopp were much clearer than those collected over the weekend.

The crew beamed down the grainy, gray-and-white images, which were displayed on a large screen in Mission Control.

Hale-Bopp passed closest to Earth early this spring and was visible to the

naked eye for several weeks. It is now much farther from Earth.

The images cannot be gathered from the ground - ultraviolet rays are invisible from Earth because the atmosphere obscures them.

This is the first space tryout of the \$500,000 telescope, developed by Southwest Research Institute in San Antonio, Texas.

A satellite released from Discovery, meanwhile, has found evidence that supports a controversial theory that snowballs the size of a house are pelting Earth's atmosphere.

Preliminary findings from an ultraviolet telescope on the satellite indicate lots of hydroxyl in the atmosphere at the high northern latitudes. That means lots of water vapor, said Robert Conway, a planetary physicist at the Naval Research Laboratory.

Conway said one possible explanation for all this water vapor at altitudes of 43 miles to 56 miles is large space snowballs, a theory presented by a University of Iowa physicist in May.

Another possibility is that it's coming from meteorites, Conway said Monday.

"This is where all the junk that we sweep through as the Earth goes around the sun, this is where it has to come through, and maybe some of that junk is snowy comets," he said. "But there are other things, and I think we need to look at all of them."

When Conway's telescope flew in

space in November 1994, it detected almost no hydroxyl above 43 miles at the middle latitudes, he said. This time,

it's checking the far north: Alaska, northern Canada, northern Russia, Greenland and Sweden.

The satellite, which also is gathering data on Earth's ozone layer, has been flying free of Discovery.



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Get the Most From Your Medicines

By Larry Lucas



Here's a quick quiz. The prize is better health.

True or False?

1. The overwhelming majority of people take their medicines exactly as they're supposed to.
2. If you forget to take your medicine one day, just double the dose the next day.
3. If you're feeling better, it's all right to stop taking your prescription.
4. The best place to store medicines is in the medicine chest in your bathroom.
5. Never throw away medicine. You never know when you or someone in your family may need it again.

If you answered "false" to all of those statements, give yourself a gold star. Here are the right answers:

1. About half of all prescription medicines are not taken properly. That means that half the people aren't getting the full benefits of their medicines. In some cases, they may be causing themselves serious harm.
2. It's important to take all your medicine doses on time. If you miss a dose, ask your physician or pharmacist what to do. In some cases, it may be all right to double up the

next day, but in other cases it could cause problems.

3. Never stop taking a prescribed medicine without asking your doctor. If you have an infectious disease, it may take all the medicine in your prescription to kill the infection. And some diseases, such as high blood pressure, have no symptoms. So, even though you are feeling fine, you could be at risk for a heart attack or stroke.

4. Medicines should be kept in airtight containers in a cool, dry location, usually not in bathrooms or kitchens where warmth and moisture can cause medicines to deteriorate and lose their effectiveness.

5. Go through your medicines periodically and safely disposes of outdated or unneeded medicines by

putting them down the garbage disposal or flushing them down the toilet. Don't share your medicines or take medicines prescribed for others, no matter how similar your symptoms.

These and other important tips are included in a new booklet, "Getting the Most From Your Medicines," published by America's Pharmaceutical Research Companies. These companies spend hundreds of millions of dollars to develop just one new medicine, and they want people to get maximum benefit from every medicine they take. The booklet includes special tips for older adults, guidelines for giving medicines to children, and a checklist of questions patients should ask their doctors.

Today's medicines can cure problems, prevent illnesses and manage chronic conditions, but only if they're taken correctly. This booklet can help you take charge and help ensure that your medicine treatment succeeds.

For a free copy of "Getting the Most From Your Medicines," write to America's Pharmaceutical Companies, Box P, 1100 15th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

Larry Lucas is Associate Vice President of the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA).

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Emotional pain is serious

By MARSHA HIGHTOWER

"When you can't touch where it hurts," is the slogan that a colleague submitted many years ago to a contest sponsored by the psychiatric hospital where we were both employed. What an apt description of what goes on when pain results from things such as the death of a spouse after 20 years of a rewarding marriage; months of unemployment due to downsizing; or the torment of seeing things that are not there and hearing things that are not said.

The fact that people experiencing psychological and emotional pain cannot touch the site of their injury, in many cases prevents them from talking about it and getting professional help. And not having the words could lead to the conclusion that the pain is not real; that it is "all in the head."

Because of the difficulty that people may experience when trying to get in touch with their pain, I was delighted a few weeks ago to read a letter written to a magazine advice columnist. The writer asked about a nervous breakdown.

Great, I thought, the columnist will explain that if five people are asked about a nervous breakdown, they will probably give five different definitions and at least that many sets of symptoms.

I couldn't have been more wrong. It would have been enlightening for the columnist to educate the distressed writer that community mental health programs, family service agencies, as well as psychiatrists, clinical psychologists and clinical social workers in private practice are excellent sources of help for psychiatric and emotional concerns.



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