

## To Your Health!

By Judy Hargis, P.A., and Audeen Wagner



### Growth Hormones

There is an ongoing controversy regarding the use of growth hormones to obtain greater productivity in dairy cows. Foremost in this debate is a growth hormone called recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH), also called rBST, recombinant bovine somatotropin. This hormone is found naturally in humans and all animals;

the problems arise with its overuse.

The FDA approved the use of rBGH in the 1930s after a short trial with laboratory mice. After decades of scientific studies that indicate human health issues, the FDA "turns a deaf ear to the pleas of consumers, food safety organizations, and scientists to reverse its approval of the hormone, or simply to require labeling of foods containing rBGH," states the Center for Food Safety. CFS is a public interest environmental advocacy group whose mission is to challenge the harmful product technology and to protect the public. We do see some products these days labeled "does not contain growth hormones" but it is not required universally, and you seldom, if ever, see a label that claims growth hormone use!

In dairy cows treated with rBGH, a number of health problems occur, including leg and hoof problems and serious reproductive abnormalities. Birth defects in calves, for instance, can be directly linked to the use of rBGH. Most alarming, though, from the consumer standpoint, is a dramatic increase in the frequency of mastitis, an infection of the udder that affects the quality of the milk, making it unfit for human consumption.

As reported in a recent issue of To Your Health!, antibiotic resistance in humans is becoming a huge health problem. Well, guess what, antibiotics are used to combat mastitis in milk cows, and residues of these drugs end up in milk and other dairy products. Scientists agree that this contributes to the increase in antibiotic resistance, which makes the use of antibiotics used to treat human infections less effective...it's a vicious cycle.

In addition, studies have shown conclusively that the levels of a hormone called "insulin-like growth factor-1" (IGF-1) are elevated in milk from dairy cows treated with rBGH, raising concerns that this might be contributing to the increased incidence of dia-

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## Diabetics, learn your eye health ABC's

Did you know that an estimated 17.9 million Americans have been diagnosed with diabetes and another 57 million people are at risk of getting the disease?

What many of these individuals may not know is that all people with diabetes – both type 1 and type 2 – are at risk for developing diabetic retinopathy, a leading cause of vision loss among adults in the United States. In fact, people with diabetes are 25 times more likely to lose their vision than those without the disease.

So this April, EyeCare America is asking Americans with diabetes to know the ABCs of diabetes and eye health.

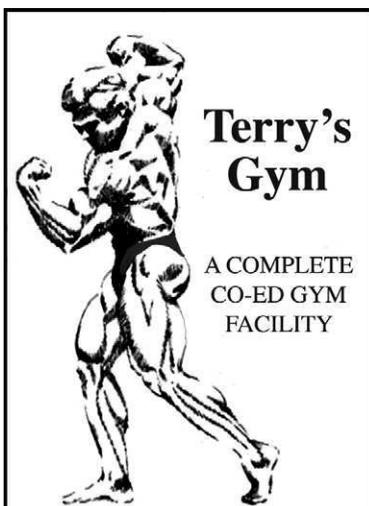
**A – Alert your Eye M.D. if you have been diagnosed with diabetes;**

**B – Be sure to have your eyes examined regularly; and**

**C – Call 1-800-272-EYES (3937) if you are 65 or older and without an ophthalmologist, to see if you qualify for a no-cost dilated eye exam through EyeCare America's Diabetes EyeCare Program.**

By following these simple steps, EyeCare America hopes to help protect seniors from preventable vision loss caused by diabetes.

"Diabetes causes up to 24,000 new cases of vision loss each year," said C. Pat Wilkinson, MD, ophthalmologist and chairman of EyeCare America's Diabetes EyeCare Program. "What people don't know is that early detection, timely treatment and appropriate follow-up care can reduce their risk of blindness by 95 percent even for people with established and significant diabetic retinopathy."



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Diabetic retinopathy is caused by changes in the blood vessels of the retina. In some people with diabetic retinopathy, blood vessels may swell and leak fluid. In other people, abnormal new blood vessels grow on the surface of the retina. In its early stages, diabetic retinopathy usually has no warning signs. Over time, however, the vision blurs and everyday tasks become more difficult. Vision loss cannot usually be regained.

EyeCare America's Diabetes EyeCare Program is designed for people who:

- Are age 65 and older
- Are U.S. citizens or legal residents
- Have not seen an ophthalmologist in three or more years
- Do not have insurance through an HMO or the VA.

People eligible for a referral through the program receive a comprehensive, medical eye exam and up to one year of care at no out-of-pocket cost for any disease diagnosed during the initial exam. Volunteer ophthalmologists accept Medicare and/or other insurance reimbursement as payment in full. Individuals without insurance are seen at no charge.

For a Diabetes EyeCare

Program referral, those interested may call 1-800-272-EYES (3937) toll-free, 24 hours a day, every day, year round.

To learn more about diabetic retinopathy, its risk factors and treatment options; view informative videos; and to learn how your vision would be affected by diabetic retinopathy, visit [www.eyecareamerica.org](http://www.eyecareamerica.org).

Founded in 1985, EyeCare America, a public service program of the Foundation of the American Academy of Ophthalmology, is committed to the preservation of sight, accomplishing its mission through public service and education. EyeCare America's (ECA) public service programs provide eye care services to the medically underserved and for those at increased risk for eye disease, through its corps of 7,000 volunteer ophthalmologists. More than 90 percent of the care is provided with no out-of-pocket cost to the patients. Public service includes programs for seniors, glaucoma, diabetes, AMD and children. EyeCare America, the largest program of its kind in American medicine, has helped more than one-million people since its inception in 1985. More information can be found at: [www.eyecareamerica.org](http://www.eyecareamerica.org).

## No health insurance? You aren't alone

Chris Thomas,  
Oregon News Service.

About one in three Oregonians younger than age 65 has gone without health insurance for at least a portion of the last two years, according to a new report from Families USA, a national health care reform advocacy group. The group is releasing data by state to add momentum to the push for reform. In Oregon, most of the uninsured are working, and Families USA executive director Ron Pollack says their lack of insurance is not just a temporary situation.

"One of the significant things to understand about this is that the overwhelming majority of these 1.1 million Oregonians, 75.8 percent - more than three out of every four - were uninsured for at least six months."

Pollack says Oregon's uninsured figures are slightly higher than the national average. His

group advocates making health insurance available to everyone in America – an idea that some see as giving too large a role for government to play, at the expense of private insurance companies.

Ellen Pinney, director of the Oregon Health Action Campaign, refers to it as "churning," when people move in and out of the health care system based on their inability to get – or to afford – insurance for months at a time.

"You don't have to scratch too hard at the data that Families USA has just released about our state to see that it proves that, more likely than not, one-third of Oregonians are churning. They do not have the ability to establish a relationship with a provider."

Pinney says the result is that people don't seek regular medical treatment, which ends up

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