

Women most likely to have stroke

by Chris Thomas, Oregon News Service

For a few years now, medical research has pointed to women's increased risk of stroke as they age. A new study of 2,200 adults ages 35 to 64 has quantified it: Women are 2.9 times more likely to have a stroke than men of the same age. Although these women had lower blood pressure and better overall blood chemistry than the men, the women had more abdominal fat.

The findings don't surprise Dr. Bob Djergaian, director of Rehabilitative Services and Comprehensive Stroke Center at the Southwest Washington Medical Center in Vancouver. He helps rehabilitate stroke victims and is seeing more – and younger – women with heart problems. Stress might also be a factor, he says, as many women juggle jobs and caregiving at midlife and tend to put themselves last. He says economic stresses don't help, either.

"Unfortunately, we're seeing too many people who can't afford health care, can't afford medication, and they're not doing anything about it from that perspective. There's also the issue of fast foods being cheaper and being less healthy. So, I think the economy is certainly creating some issues."

Djergaian's stroke patients tell him they never thought it could happen to them – although they knew they weren't eating right or getting enough exercise. He shares this advice:

"Work on all of the risk factors, not just weight and activity. Those are two of the critical ones, but especially people who have a family history of stroke and heart disease absolutely must look at their diet. Stop smoking, if they're smoking; make sure their diabetes is under control, if they have it."

Djergaian says one of his team's toughest challenges is getting people, even after they've had strokes, to stay active and keep the weight off.

"It's a major issue, and it's one of the issues that reflects why there's probably a higher incidence of stroke in the Northwest, both in men and women."

The American Heart Association says about 55 percent of Oregon women are either overweight or obese. Until that changes, Djergaian predicts the numbers of strokes and heart attacks will continue to climb.

The study, from the Keck School of Medicine at the University of Southern California, was presented February 25 at the American Stroke Association International Stroke Conference.

Columbia County 13 in health ranking

Benton County has the healthiest residents in Oregon, according to a new national report released February 17 that ranks each county in every state.

The report, by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, is the first annual "health checkup" ranking counties using such criteria as the length and quality of life of county residents as well as health behaviors, clinical care, social and economic factors and physical environment. This is the first time people will be able to see how the overall health of their county compares to others in the state.

"These rankings show that good health happens where we live, work and play, and the choices we make as a community. The report raises many questions and my hope is that our counties will examine the issues and improve the health in their communities," said Mel Kohn, M.D., M.P.H., director of Oregon Public Health.

After Benton, the top 10 counties in descending order are Washington, Clackamas, Polk, Hood River, Deschutes, Grant, Wasco, Wallowa and Marion.

Gilliam, Sherman and

Wheeler counties were not ranked because of inadequate data or data that were not comparable to other counties.

The lowest 10 counties are Coos, Curry, Linn, Josephine, Lincoln, Baker, Douglas, Lake, Klamath and Jefferson — which ranks as the least healthy county. Multnomah County came in at number 21 out of 33.

Columbia County finished out of the top ten, ranking number 12 in overall health, but beat Washington County in one category; Physical Environment. Columbia County was rated 13 in this category comparing to Washington County, rated 26.

The report used five measures to assess the level of overall health or health outcomes for Oregon by county: the rate of people dying before age 75, the percent of people who report being in fair or poor health, the numbers of days people report being in poor physical and poor mental health, and the rate of low-birth-weight babies.

The report looked at factors that affect people's health within four categories: health behavior, clinical care, social and economic factors, and physical environment. Some of the

many health factors they evaluated included the rates of adult smoking, adult obesity, binge drinking, and teenage pregnancy; the number of uninsured adults; availability of primary care providers; preventable hospital stays; rates of high school graduation; number of children in poverty; violent crime; access to healthy foods; air pollution levels; and liquor store density.

For example, Hood River County ranked first in access to clinical care but came in fifth overall. Even in the lowest ranked counties there were positive health factors. Jefferson, for instance, was ranked second for physical environment.

"A community's health is determined by more than just its health care system. Health is everyone's business. We can use the information in this report as a call to action for the health of all Oregonians," Kohn said.

The entire online report for each state is available at www.countyhealthrankings.org.

Daylight Saving Time begins on Sunday, March 14



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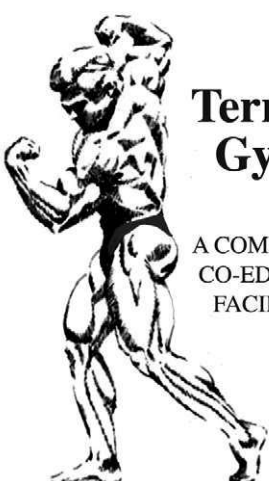
Dehydration can affect mood

Dehydration has long been known to compromise physical performance. Now, a new Tufts University study provides insight into the effects of mild dehydration on young athletes, and possibly into the lives of people too busy to consume enough water daily.

About 30 male and female Tufts students were assigned to either a "dehydration group" not given fluids during athletics, or a control group that was given water. Participants weighed in before and after athletics to assess body water loss.

After athletic activity, participants underwent cognitive tests, which included short-term memory and mood scales. Researchers found that dehydration was associated with negative mood, including fatigue and confusion, compared to the hydrated group. The level of mild dehydration (losses of between 1% and 2%) experienced among study participants is comparable to the mild dehydration some people experience in their daily lives from drinking insufficient amounts of water.

Source: Tufts Health & Nutrition Update



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