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# SCIENCE

## HOW AND WHY QUESTIONS OF THE EARTH

### Natural ways to keep the germs away

SONYA BUYTING

THE BRUNSWICKAN

Midterms are soon approaching and there are so many empty seats in your classes. Why? Well of course there are many students who prefer not to go, but there are also many students who have caught the cold or flu bug. Coming down with a cold or flu is almost inevitable for a university student. There is always that one person in your class coughing away and spreading those nasty germs. The next thing you know, a cold epidemic breaks out and everyone you know is sick.

The dreaded cold has a variety of symptoms; ranging from a sore throat, runny nose, headaches, aching, fever, and upper respiratory congestion. The flu bug is usually more severe; a high fever develops, your muscles start to ache, and your energy level is totally depleted. Experts agree that the

best medicine is to greet the germs with a strong immune system. That means looking after yourself in sickness and in health.

During a cold, your body is going through a detoxification. It is flushing out the waste overload created by fermentation and disease build-up (from bacteria, germs and toxins). So your immune system opens up and drains the excess mucous through coughing, sneezing, runny nose, diarrhea, etc.

That may sound all too familiar to many people. But don't lose hope, there are ways to prevent getting sick in the first place.

- Good nutrition. This is very important to maintain a healthy immune system. You should reduce the simple sugars (cane sugar, corn syrup, honey, concentrated fruit sugar) that you intake because they reduce the function of white blood cells.

- Eliminate synthetic coloring, synthetic sweeteners, artificial flavorings, preservatives,

and synthetic oils because they overexert the immune system and mucous membranes.

- Food which is high in protein (milk, meats, eggs, and nuts) should not be eaten with food which is high in concentrated carbohydrates (sugars, fruit, and other sweet foods) because they cause fermentation in the gut and colon.

- Alcohol and tobacco consumption, prescribed, non-prescribed and recreational drug use, environmental factors and allergies significantly weaken the immune system.

- Stress also weakens the immune system. People who are prone to stress should take their vitamins. Vitamins A and C, beta-carotene, zinc, and other antioxidants help prevent free-radical induced damage to the thymus.

- Last but not least, stay well rested so your body may have the energy to fight off any germs that come your way.

### Strange but true: Healing powers of the pen

SCIENCE STAFF

THE BRUNSWICKAN

Many people already know that personal writing will improve emotional health, but scientists at Southern Methodist University and Ohio State University College of Medicine have now proven that writing has a positive effect on your physical health, too.

Results from tests done by a team of clinical psychologists and immunologists showed that subjects who write emotionally and thoughtfully about traumatic experiences had:

- increased T-cell production
- a drop in physician visits
- fewer absentee days
- generally improved physical health

The collective conclusion of these studies is that writing about your feelings in a personal notebook can be instrumental in healthful living.

The history of journaling goes right back to the 10th century in Japan where "Pillow Books" were used to record daily lives and thoughts. More recently, journaling is often used to explore the self. Ira Progoff, a psychologist credited with being the "father" of modern journaling, used his written work as a way of exploring ideas, thoughts, and dreams.

Realize that you don't need to be an

exceptional writer. In fact, you don't even have to know how to spell or be able to write legibly. The important thing is that you get your thoughts and feelings down on that paper. This is probably one of the best ways of venting your emotions, of mirroring them back to yourself and validating the fact that your feelings are for REAL. Sometimes, the blank white paper in front of you can be INTIMIDATING. The precise straightness of the edges, the stark sterile whiteness of the page staring up at you...the pressure is on for you to fill up that empty space. Do you know what to do? Get started.

There are different ways of motivating yourself to do this. You can write reflectively, as if you were an observer of your own life. In this case you would use "she" and "he" rather than "I" in your sentences. Describing your own activities as an observer frequently gives perspective on otherwise very personal and (often) prejudged experiences.

Cathartic writing is all-out emotional writing—no holds barred! This is the extreme way to go. Don't plan what you write, just begin with something like "Right now I feel..." and let your heart take over. Put your pain, fear, anger, joy and gratitude down on the paper. Say what you want and need to say. The journal won't

judge or criticise you. It is a safe and helpful place to let out everything you feel—let your intuition lead you.

Sometimes writing a letter to someone, you still have things you would like to say or express to them but can't due to circumstances (maybe they died, moved away or you just don't keep in touch with them anymore) is a real help, relief in a sense. Even if the letter remains unsent, you wrote your feelings down on paper so that they are now physically tangible. You can now touch and see your feelings on that page... they are REAL.

But REMEMBER—the way in which you write—whether it be reflective or just emotional outpourings it doesn't really matter. Any kind of writing that fills up that blank page with words, with emotions and reflections of yourself is a process of validation.

From a personal vantage-point, writing has been a very positive experience for me; it has helped me to learn about myself and has encouraged me to think more about issues in my life than I would have otherwise.

It comes as no surprise to me that scientific studies have now shown that there are physical benefits as well. I believe it. I have a feeling that the benefits of writing go far beyond the pages I fill.

### A New Column for Those Interested in Health Related Issues Eh?!? What's Up, Doc?

Hey, have you heard about that amazing medical breakthrough, that frightening new disease or that really cool experiment? No? With school, work, family and friends, it is often hard for students to keep up with the fast paced world of science and health. Guess what?? That's what this column is for. Each week, I'll do your research for you. Lucky you! (And no, I don't do term papers.) Let me introduce myself...my name is Jenni Gillis. I'm a second year Joint Arts and Science student interested in the field of medicine.

Each week, I'll endeavour to bring to your attention the latest headlines from the world of science and medicine and I will attempt to point you in the right direction for more detailed information. Think of this column as a sort of "Plays of the Week" highlight reel; for more information, check the sources listed in the article. Please, if you find something you think other students might be interested in just drop the details off in the Health-Sciences mailbox in the main office of Bailey Hall with my name on it, or E-mail me at 159X@unb.ca. Here are some interesting developments from the past week or so.

An ongoing study, in Washington DC, on a set of fraternal twins infected with HIV from birth has yielded some interesting results. At ten weeks old, both infants were treated with a combination of three HIV drugs (often referred to as the HIV cocktail developed by Dr. David Ho, Time magazine's Man of the Year.) Now, the infants are eighteen months old and the female is HIV negative. Although the virus is not present, doctors hesitate to diagnose her as "cured." The male twin initially tested negative but has since tested positive for HIV. These findings seem to support the belief that the sooner a patient is treated aggressively, the more hopeful the prognosis will be. (The Daily Citizen Jan. 29/97) So, if you think you might have been exposed to HIV, stop thinking and get tested, a matter of months could make a lifetime of difference.

As many of you may have heard, the antihistamine "Seldane" is out. Studies in the United States have indicated that "Seldane," when taken with certain antifungals and antibiotics, can cause abnormal heart rhythms and even in some cases death. The U.S. government may ban the drug due to these devastating side effects. (Time, Jan. 27/97)

For information about health sciences events, watch for posters and sign up sheets in the science library, the Health-Sciences bulletin board and office door. (B117)

That's it for this week's column. Remember, if you discover any interesting news items in the next week, let me know.

Jenni Gillis is a member of the Health Sciences Society

### Water does a body good

SONYA BUYTING

THE BRUNSWICKAN

Water is a very important molecule in nature. It is the world's most abundant essential nutrient and helps shape everything from the earth's surface to our bodies.

When ingesting water, it is absorbed through the intestines and entered into the bloodstream. The extra water increases the amount of fluid in the blood vessels. Therefore, there is an increase in blood volume resulting in a subsequent increase in blood circulation.

Good blood circulation is vital to remaining healthy. Every part of your body needs blood in constant supply. So smooth, strong blood circulation is extremely important to sustain life, especially since illness is delivered by or in blood.

Water also helps nutrients move into the bloodstream and taxis them to the areas of the body where they are needed. Essential nutrients are able to dissolve in water so the body can use them properly. This simple molecule with two hydrogens and an oxygen assists in cell and tissue repair. It also keeps mucous membranes soft as well as helping to regulate body temperature.

Now you know that water is important and "Does a Body Good." The recommended daily intake of water for an adult is six to eight eight-ounce glasses. That is the amount of water you should drink everyday to keep your body running smoothly.

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