



Lesbian Health Initiative of Houston, Inc.



Volume 8, Issue 3

Newsletter

Fall 2005

LHI Rainbow Health Fair

LHI HAS A NEW PHONE NUMBER: 713-426-3356

On Saturday, November 5, LHI will host its fall Rainbow Health Fair. This bi-annual event will be held in collaboration with M D Anderson's Mobile Mammography Program and the Montrose Clinic. The site of the Fair will be the Montrose Clinic at 215 Westheimer.

Services offered free of charge during the Health Fair will be: Mammograms, Blood Sugar testing, Blood pressure checks, HgA1c blood test for diabetics, Total Cholesterol testing, Pelvic exams and Pap tests, breast exams, HIV and STD testing and counseling, and Osteoporosis screening (courtesy of Gateway Chiropractic). We will also offer screenings for depression/anxiety and oral cancer.

Health education materials on a diverse variety of diseases and conditions will also be available at no cost. Health professionals will be on hand to talk with clients to answer questions or to refer for more information.

The Health Fair will begin at 8:15am and continue until 3:00pm. Mammograms may be scheduled by calling LHI's voice mail at 713-426-3356, leaving a message with your phone number and name. The voice main is checked numerous times each day and calls will be returned in a timely manner. It is very important to speak clearly, slowly and give your phone number twice.

To schedule a pelvic exam and Pap test call 713-830-3075.

You should be 40 years of age to receive a mammogram at the Health Fair due to the restrictions set by M D Anderson. If you are under age 40 and have a problem with a breast, or an immediate family history of breast cancer, call us and we will call you back to discuss other no-cost options we can make available to you.

In This Issue:

1. LHI Rainbow Health Fair
- 2-6. Lesbians and Breast Cancer
7. 2006 LHI Valentine Gala Information
8. LHI Survey Information
9. Letter from the President of LHI
10. Why Health Fairs are scheduled when they are
11. Answers to questions about fish oil
12. Secondhand Smoke Hurts Your Heart

Lesbian Health Initiative of Houston, Inc. Mission Statement

Our mission is to promote women's health in the
Lesbian, Gay, BiSexual and
Transgender Community
To accomplish this we will:

- Provide education and health resources to our
community
- Establish government and private agency liasions
to initiate and support funding of programs to
promote health and wellness
- Form partnerships with health care providers
willing to ensure that women in our community
have access to sensitive and responsible
health care

LESBIANS AND BREAST CANCER

Background

According to the American Cancer Society, the best defense against cancer is prevention and early detection. Lesbians, as a group, may have higher risks for certain types of cancer based on higher rates of some specific risk factors. In addition, they experience barriers to care that could impede early detection.

Behavioral risk factors may increase the risk of breast cancer for lesbians.

Survey research and clinical experience suggest that some behaviors that have been linked to an increased risk for breast cancer may be more common among lesbians and women who partner with women.

- Lesbians are more likely to smoke, drink more alcohol, and be overweight than heterosexual women.
- Lesbians are less likely to use oral contraceptives, bear children, or breast feed than heterosexual women.
- Lesbians are also significantly more likely than heterosexual women to have never had a mammogram and to eat fewer fruits and vegetables daily.
- Lesbians can face serious barriers to receiving the screening and care they need because of societal discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender expression.

Risk factors for Breast Cancer

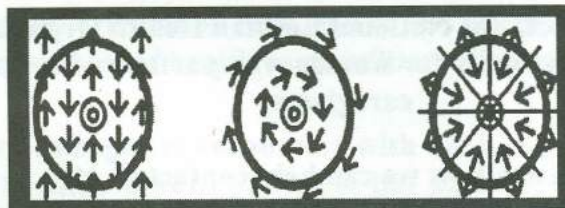
- Age
- Personal history of breast cancer
- Family History
- Reproductive history (early start of menstruation, not having children, delaying childbirth past age 30)
- Race/Ethnicity
- Access to and utilization of healthcare
- Dietary (such as alcohol consumption and a high-fat diet)
- Environmental Factors

Access to care

Lesbians have decreased access to health care due to factors such as lower levels of health insurance, and heterosexism/homophobia among health care providers. These barriers mean that lesbians often delay seeking care until their conditions are advanced.

Touch Yourself!

Do a Breast Self Exam (BSE) every month right after menstruation. All breasts are lumpy. Doing BSE regularly will make you more familiar with what your breasts feel like. Knowing your breasts will help you identify any changes that may occur



How To

- Raise one arm above your head and using the pads of your fingers, start on the outside and work your way in using small circles.
- Do your self examination in front of the mirror, and lying down.
- Look for any unusual puckering or dimples, thickening, or change in size or shape in your breasts.
- You should also examine your nipples for any discharge or changes in direction (pointing inward).
- Make sure to feel for any swelling or changes under your arms, where your lymph nodes are.

Screening

There are many ways your doctor or other healthcare provider can help you detect breast cancer during its earliest stages - when it is more treatable.

Mammography: A mammogram is a special type of x-ray of your breast designed to find breast cancer, calcifications, or cysts when they are very small. If you are 40+ you should

...celebrate your life by getting a mammogram every year!

Clinical Breast Examination (CBE) - Your health care provider will do a clinical breast examination every three years for women in their 20's and 30's and annually for women 40 and older.

Resources:

Mautner Project, the National Lesbian Health Organization: Phone: 1-866-MAUTNER (866-628-8637) <http://www.cancer.gov/cancerinfo>.

The National Cancer Institute (NCI):
Phone: 800-4-CANCER (800-422-6237) <http://www.cancer.gov/cancerinfo>.

American Cancer Society <http://www.cancer.org>
National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship <http://www.canceradvocacy.org>

Mautner Project, the National Lesbian Health Organization offers education, support, and advocacy for women who partner with women, their partners and caregivers.

To learn how we can help contact us at:
Phone: 202.332.5555 www.mautnerproject.org

WHY ARE LESBIANS AT GREATER RISK OF CANCER?

- ❖ **Access** - Lesbians access health care less frequently than heterosexual women.
- ❖ **Childbearing** - Lesbians are more likely to be childless or delay parenting until after 30.
- ❖ **Behavioral** - Lesbians as a group have higher rates of obesity, smoking and alcohol consumption.
- ❖ **Screening** - Lesbians are less likely to receive routine gynecological services such as birth control and prenatal care – and are therefore screened less often for breast and cervical cancer.
- ❖ **Insurance** - Lesbians are more affected by women's lower earning power and do not benefit from spousal health insurance coverage.

WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS FOR LESBIANS?

- ❖ **Discrimination** - Anticipated, perceived, or actual discrimination by health care provider based on sexual identity and/or behavior
- ❖ **Misinformation** - Or inaccurate assumptions about health risks of lesbians and women who partner with women and their need for screening (both among women who partner with women and providers)
- ❖ **Exclusion** - Perceived or actual exclusion from health promotion campaigns
- ❖ **Fear** - Disclosure of sexual orientation may lead to loss of custody, job, housing and social support; substandard or refusal of health care; military discharge.
- ❖ **Past Experience** - Previous negative encounters with the health care system including: derogatory comments, voyeurism, hostility toward patient or her partner, undue roughness in physical examinations, etc., etc.

Informed and open discussions regarding sexuality promote health, prevent disease and improve access to and the quality of health care. To deliver competent care to this special population, providers need knowledge of the special needs of lesbians in their care. Sufficient information on lesbian health care and how providers can communicate their expertise and acceptance to patients is almost nonexistent in medical school curricula and in the continuing education programs of health professions. With the increase in managed care, lesbians have fewer options regarding their choice of health care providers. This makes it imperative that all health professionals are able to provide competent care to all patients.

REMOVING THE BARRIERS TO ACCESSING HEALTH CARE FOR LESBIANS:

OBJECTIVES:

- Define the dimensions of culture and the principles of culturally competent medical care;
- Discuss the diversity of the population described as lesbian or women who partner with women;
- List individual, structural and institutional factors that affect access to health care and result in barriers to screening for breast and cervical cancer among lesbians;

continued

- Describe ways in which a culturally competent approach can reduce or eliminate barriers to accessing health care and cancer screening;
- Demonstrate the application of principles of cultural competency to your medical practice;
- Implement a plan for applying the skills learned; and help you locate resources to facilitate ongoing education and skill building in providing optimal care to lesbians;

The goal of the curriculum [of the conference that was held early summer 2005] is to improve individual practitioners' skills and create systemic change so that lesbians feel truly comfortable in a health care setting.

The Mautner Project, The National Lesbian Health Organization

1707 L Street, Suite 230

Washington, D C 20036

Funded by: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

LHI VALENTINE DINNER/DANCE With ENTERTAINMENT for 2006

Much to our dismay, the Warwick Hotel has been sold and is closed for major renovations and remodeling. It is scheduled to reopen sometime in the spring of 2006.

Which means LHI will not have the Warwick Hotel for our annual fundraiser dinner/dance and entertainment next February 11. We wish things were different as we had great response about the Warwick Hotel facilities.

We are in the process of planning the 2006 Gala and will do our best to select a location that is on or within Loop 610 and will choose a reputable hotel with good food, good parking and easy access from the streets.

LHI will begin to advertise our 2006 Gala later this fall so watch for information. Check our website at: www.lhihouston.org as the details will be posted there first, or if you want information call our voice mail at 713-426-3356 to request information, or email us at: lhi@lhihouston.org

The funds we obtain from our annual Gala are used to continue LHI's programs of providing health screenings and information at our twice-annual Health Fairs, at Empower, the Houston Women's Festival and other locations. We are also purchasing new equipment to enable us to do additional health screenings that we have not previously been able to offer.

LHI remains committed to serving the women of our GLBT community to the best of our ability.

We Do Everything ... Almost

AL & NORVAL AUTO SERVICE

QUALITY, PROFESSIONAL AND HONEST SERVICE

AMERICAN & FOREIGN

COMPUTER DIAGNOSTICS

AC BRAKES TUNE-UPS BODY WORK

Celebrating 59 Years of Service to Houston 1946 – 2005

2040 Marshall

713-523-4064

LHI Survey Information -- We Still Need Your Input

We have received a fair number of responses to our survey but need many more. The link below has been corrected so please take the time to complete the survey.

When we write grants for funding for mammograms and other health services, the grantors ask us questions regarding how we know there is a need for this and many ask for demographic information about the women who need our services.

We will not be able to obtain adequate funding without up to date information. Since there is a decreasing amount being put into both private industry and government health programs, it is imperative that we access every private source available to us. We know we have improved health and saved lives -- we need to continue to do so.

We need information on a broad spectrum of the community and we are making plans to access every group available to us to obtain the needed information.

Please go to: www.lhihouston.org On the home page you will see "LHI Survey" to click on to reach the survey, or you can go directly to it by: www.lhihouston.org/lhisurvey.htm (this link has been corrected). Please complete the questions then click to email it to LHI. Thanks.

LESBIAN HEALTH INITIATIVE (LHI) RAINBOW HEALTH FAIR

For Gay, Lesbian, Bi-Sexual & Transgender Women ONLY
(WOMEN WHO PARTNER WITH WOMEN)

IN COOPERATION WITH THE MONTROSE CLINIC and
M D ANDERSON CANCER CENTER'S MOBILE MAMMOGRAPHY PROGRAM

Saturday November 5, 2005

8:20am – 3:00pm

SERVICES OFFERED :

MAMMOGRAMS, CHOLESTEROL CHECK,
BLOOD PRESSURE & BLOOD GLUCOSE CHECKS,
HgA1c BLOOD TESTING FOR DIABETICS,
BREAST EXAMS, PAP SMEARS AND PELVIC EXAMS,
HIV/STD TESTING & COUNSELING
OSTEOPOROSIS & ORAL CANCER SCREENINGS
DEPRESSION & ANXIETY SCREENING,
DURABLE MEDICAL POWER OF ATTORNEY,
ADVANCE DIRECTIVE (LIVING WILL)

TO SCHEDULE A MAMMOGRAM CALL:

713-426-3356 or email: lhi@lhihouston.org

FOR WELL WOMAN EXAMS, PAP TESTS, and

HIV/STD services CALL: 713-830-3075

LOCATION: MONTROSE CLINIC @ 215 WESTHEIMER, HOUSTON

8:20am to 3:15pm

Call 713-426-3356

Email: lhi@lhihouston.org Website: www.lhihouston.org

LHI is funded by: The Houston Black Tie Dinner; Kindred Spirits 2005; Hollyfield Foundation; John Steven Kellett Foundation; Magnolia Christmas Party; The Krewe of Olympus; Texas Gay Rodeo Association, Individual donors; and Participants of the 2005 LHI Valentine Fundraiser.

Underwriter of 2005 Valentine Event: Isabel Martinez, M D of Blue Mesa Medical Associates.

Letter from the President:

If you are like most people you get many emails purporting to be giving you "true" or "for real" information about just about anything you can think of.

And not knowing any better, you forward the email on to many others.

Most of these emails are what are known as "urban legends", and are monumental lies.

Before you forward any of these emails on to others, take a few minutes to check them out for truth and reliability by going to the following websites as posted on FEMNET:

www.snopes.com

or

www.about.com/urbanlegends

Check it before you share it.

Last June at the Health Fair LHI began providing the forms needed for you to have a valid Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care. Continuing with this service we will have notaries at the Fair to notarize this document. We will also have forms for Advance Directive to Physicians (Living Will), and those needed for you to apply for a Gold Card in the Harris County Hospital District System.

Please give some thought to who you would want to be responsible for your care if you were not able to do it yourself. Whatever you decide, please don't put yourself in a situation in which you end up like Terri Shiavo. No one should end up in that kind of medical/legal hell.

Lucy Watson, President LHI

Think Positive and be Proactive

We want you on our mailing list! But for that we need your correct address - please send your change of address to us at:

LHI

P O Box 130158

Houston, TX 77219-0158

Or email us at:

lhi@lhihouston.org

Website: www.lhihouston.org

Call Notes message: 713-426-3356

LHI is funded by the following:

Houston Black Tie Dinner, Inc.

Kindred Spirits Celebration

John Steven Kellett Foundation

The Hollyfield Foundation

Magnolia Christmas Party

LHI Valentine Ball Fundraiser

Dr. Isabel Martinez

The Krewe of Olympus

Texas Gay Rodeo Assn. (TGRA) And Private Donors Thank you for your generosity.

The newsletter of the Lesbian Health Initiative, Inc. (LHI) is published as a public service to empower the LGBT community on health issues.

LHI is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit organization.

LHI is a member of the Houston GLBT Chamber of Commerce.

**

Newsletter Committee:

Lucy Watson, Pat Gandy, Scottie Scott, Cathy Logan, Cathy McMillan, Denise Dunstan, Shirley Bristow, Marie Horton, Melisa Frisby, Pat Alford, Delma Cummings.

Signs of a Stroke:

Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body.

Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding.

Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes.

Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination.

Sudden severe headache with no known cause.

If you or someone you know has had a stroke, call the Stroke Family "Warmline"

1-800-553-6321

+++++

American Stroke Association

A division of American Heart Association

For a Healthier Heart: Don't smoke

Have your blood pressure checked regularly

Eat foods low in saturated fats and cholesterol

Stay physically active

Maintain proper weight
The Mended Hearts, Inc.

Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 for a Mended Hearts Chapter for more info. on heart disease or support groups

©American Heart Assn. 1999

LHI Board of Directors

- Lucy Watson, President**
- Pat Gandy, Vice President**
- Melisa Frisby, Secretary**
- Pat Alford, Treasurer**
- E. L. "Scottie" Scott**
- Mina Garcia**
- Delma Cummings**
- Shirley Bristow**
- Denise Dunstan**
- Debie Logan**
- Susan Rokes**
- Donna Layton**
- Cathy McMillan**

LHI meets the first Tuesday night of each month, 6:30pm in the library at RMCChurch at the corner of W. 11th Street and T. C. Jester Blvd.

We conduct open meetings and our meeting space is ADA compliant and easily accessed without a lot of walking. We welcome interested women.

Why do we schedule Health Fairs when we do?

LHI hosts two Health Fairs each year, one in early June to coincide with GLBT Pride Month and one in early November.

Now and then the date for a Health Fair conflicts with a Comets game or some other popular event.

LHI must reserve the mammogram bus from M. D. Anderson a year in advance because of the demand for their services in the Houston community. There are only 3 mammogram buses to serve the Greater Houston Metropolitan community.

Scottie called the Comets' office to try to learn their schedule for 2006 in an attempt to avoid a conflict with a game. We were informed the WNBA schedules are not prepared until early each year and are done by computer at the WNBA. This being the case, we have no way to know game dates in order to avoid conflicts. LHI regrets this situation as it means some medical professionals refuse to volunteer at the Health Fairs because it would mean their being late for, or missing an afternoon ball game.

LHI's priority is to provide much needed services to our community. We filled every available slot for mammograms, Pap tests, etc. at the June 2005 Health Fair and were grateful to have enough medical and other help to see and accommodate our clients.

We thank everyone who volunteered to work at the June Health Fair. It was a good thing to do!

Inside every older person is a younger person –
wondering what the hell happened.
Cora Harvey Armstrong

Below is a link to the Harris County Hospital District Gold Card System
This link will take you to the page where you can download and print the application for a Gold Card, plus more information.
<http://www.hchdonline.com/patient/onecard/goldcard.htm>

LHI Community Calendar

September 24 Houston Women's Festival
October 2 AssistHers Decadent Dessert Party
4-7pm at Club Meteor www.assisthers.org
November 5 LHI Rainbow Health Fair

Answers to questions about fish oil

For most people, cod-liver oil isn't recommended. Like other forms of fish oil, cod-liver oil is rich in omega-3 fatty acids, which may have numerous cardiovascular and other health benefits. However, cod-liver oil and other types of fish-liver oils (halibut or shark) also contain large amounts of vitamin A.

Vitamin A plays a part in healthy vision, bone growth, normal cell and skin growth, reproduction and regulation of the immune system. The Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) is 900 micrograms (about 3,000 international units) for men, and 700 micrograms (about 2,330 international units) for women.

However, this is a case where too much of a good thing can be bad. Too much vitamin A has been linked to reduced bone mineral density leading to osteoporosis and hip fractures, liver abnormalities, hair loss, certain neurological problems, birth defects, and many other adverse effects. If combined with a multivitamin high in vitamin A as well as dietary vitamin A, even a small, daily dose of cod-liver oil may increase your risk of vitamin A toxicity. A single teaspoonful of cod-liver oil contains as much as 4,500 international units of vitamin A, far more than the RDA for adults.

In addition, cod-liver oil is more likely to be contaminated with pollutants such as polychlorinated biphenyl (PCB) than are other fish oil supplements. Many of these toxins become concentrated in the liver.

Food is always your best source of any nutrient, and health experts recommend that most people eat fish twice a week. However, if you have coronary artery disease or high triglycerides, your doctor may recommend a fish-oil supplement along with a diet high in omega-3 fatty acids. If so, look for a *supplement that's made from a source other than fish liver.*

From Second opinion column, Mayo Clinic Health Letter, Volume 23, Number 8, August 2005.

Want to advertise your group or its events?

Call LHI at 713-426-3356 or email lhi@lhihouston.org for pricing information.

LHI publishes this newsletter three times a year, mailing it to over 898 GLBT women – an exclusive list for a select group of very special women!

The newsletter is distributed to local GLBT business outlets as well.

The Houston Women's Group
A feminist group in which
each woman defines her
own feminism.
Sunday 10:45am – 12:30pm
First Unitarian Church
Southmore @ Fannin St.
Third floor in the
Sojourner Truth Room
Iris Sizemore 713-529-8751

HOUSTON BUYERS CLUB

Discount prices on your
nutritional supplements

3224 Yoakum across from the
side of Half Price Books

713-520-5228

*** FEMNET ***
**A FEMINIST/LESBIAN
ONLINE NETWORK**

Email: FEMNET-
owner@yahoo.com

"Another Way to Build
Community".
Deborah Bell
Your list Diva

Secondhand Smoke Hurts Heart Like Smoking

By Miranda Hitti
WebMD Medical News

Reviewed by Brunilda Nazario, MD
on Monday, May 23, 2005

May 23, 2005 -- The heart just doesn't like smoking, no matter who's doing it.

That's the take-home message of a review of research about secondhand smoke's cardiac toll. The report -- published in *Circulation* -- documents a long list of heart hazards from secondhand smoke.

Wisp for wisp, secondhand smoke's heart damage often rivals that of active smoking, and even a little exposure may have an impact, says the review by Joaquin Barnoya, MD, MPH, and colleagues.

Secondhand smoke's heart effects are "rapid and large," like those of air pollution, say Barnoya and colleagues. How large? On average, the heart effects of even brief secondhand smoke exposure are about 80% to 90% as large as that from chronic active smoking, they say.

An 'Exquisitely Sensitive' Heart

Smokers' hearts bear the biggest burden. They are exposed to more toxins from smoking than people who only get secondhand smoke. But that doesn't appear to make much difference to the heart, says the review.

Passive smoke has a much larger effect on the heart than would be expected from a comparison of the dose of toxins, they write.

Despite the fact that the dose of smoke delivered to active smokers is 100 times or more than that delivered to a passive smoker, the risk of heart disease for smokers is more than two-thirds higher compared with a third higher for passive smokers, says the review.

The cardiovascular system may be "exquisitely sensitive to the toxins in secondhand smoke," write the researchers.

Growing Evidence of the Dangers of Secondhand Smoke

The researchers say that the effects of passive smoke are numerous and interact with each other, increasing the risk of heart disease. Here are some of the heart hazards that the review linked to secondhand smoke.

- Increased blood clotting ability
- Increased blood vessel wall abnormalities
- Higher risk of atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries)
- Lower levels of HDL "good" cholesterol (even in children)
- More buildup of LDL "bad" cholesterol in artery walls

continued

- Higher blood levels of markers of inflammation that are linked to heart disease and blood vessel wall plaque buildup
- Increased source of cell-damaging free radicals
- Lower levels of antioxidants, which fight free radicals

Evidence about secondhand smoke's heart dangers has been growing since the mid-1980s, say the researchers.

"Secondhand smoke increases the risk of heart disease by [about] 30%, accounting for at least 35,000 deaths annually in the United States," they write.

Brief Exposure Can Have an Impact Secondhand smoke may register on the heart in a short time, the review shows.

"The effects of even brief (minutes to hours) passive smoking are often nearly as large (averaging 80% to 90%) as chronic active smoking," says the review.

For instance, one study exposed 12 men to six hours of secondhand smoke -- about what someone might get from an evening in a smoky bar. For the next 24 hours, the men's levels of HDL "good" cholesterol were significantly lower than before the experiment.

In another study, healthy men breathed secondhand smoke from 15 cigarettes for an hour in an unventilated room. During that hour, the men had a significant increase in aortic arterial stiffness -- an early marker of blood vessel wall abnormalities that increases heart disease risk.

The stiffness started after just 15 minutes, then hit and maintained its peak at 30 minutes.

Antioxidant Defense? Antioxidant supplements might help replenish antioxidant levels lowered by secondhand smoke, says the review.

However, that "probably will not prevent the [heart] damage associated with secondhand smoke because such supplements do not seem to reduce the risk of heart disease in general," say the researchers.

Quitting smoking and limiting exposure to secondhand smoke may help your health. Smoking has been tied to many other health problems besides heart disease, including cancer, erectile dysfunction, sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), asthma, infertility, and problems in pregnancies.

Mechanisms May Work Together

The mechanisms behind secondhand smoke's heart damage may gang up, egging each other on to raise heart disease risk, write Barnoya and colleagues. Barnoya worked on the review while on staff at the University of California, San Francisco. Now, he works at the Unidad de Cirugía Cardiovascular de Guatemala.

SOURCES: Barnoya, J. *Circulation*, May 24, 2005; vol 111. News release, American Heart Association. WebMD Feature: "10 Overlooked Reasons to Quit Smoking." "10 Overlooked Reasons to Quit Smoking." WebMD Medical Reference from Healthwise: "Quitting Tobacco Use: How is Smoking Harmful?" © 2005 WebMD Inc. All rights reserved.

Alcohol Withdrawal

Making a safe, clean break

Maybe your kids [or family] are right. You probably should cut back on your drinking. So you go to bed without your usual nightcap and decide you'll also skip your morning shot of whiskey with your coffee.

But pouring that morning cup of coffee is difficult – your hands are shaking badly. So you add the shot of whiskey and things calm down.

Hand tremors can be just one aspect of alcohol withdrawal syndrome. This syndrome can overtake people dependent on alcohol if they abruptly stop drinking or suddenly reduce their alcohol consumption. Changes in the body due to alcohol withdrawal can produce disturbing symptoms. Alcohol withdrawal can even be life-threatening.

Alcohol and body chemistry

Alcohol use commonly elevates mood and takes away immediate concerns. It's also known to have a relaxing and sedative effect. But this effect has a tendency to diminish over time as your body develops a tolerance to alcohol.

For some, the need for continuous use results from cravings or a false belief that alcohol addresses their problems. This increased tolerance for alcohol over time reflects changes in the balance of certain chemicals in the brain.

If alcohol is suddenly withdrawn, the brain is unable to immediately restore the normal balance between excitation and inhibition. The result is alcohol withdrawal syndrome.

Signs and symptoms of alcohol withdrawal and their severity generally relate to how much alcohol a person consumes and how long he or she has been dependent on alcohol. Genetics may also play a role.

Withdrawal signs and symptoms may occur within hours of stopping drinking. These may include insomnia, vivid dreams, mild to severe anxiety, unsettled mood, agitation, irritability, tremors, appetite loss, nausea, vomiting, headache, sweating, heart palpitations and hearing things that aren't there (auditory hallucinations). You may also run a low-grade fever, experience a rapid pulse and have elevated blood pressure.

Sometimes, alcohol withdrawal culminates in the development of seizures, delirium tremens, (D.T.'s), or both. D.T.'s are characterized by markedly elevated blood pressure and other signs of withdrawal accompanied by disorientation, agitation and visual hallucinations.

D.T.'s involve hallucinations that are extremely vivid, sometimes prompting inappropriate and life threatening actions. D.T.'s are a dangerous condition and a medical emergency requiring immediate care and hospitalization.

Break carefully

You may have heard it's possible for people dependent on alcohol to wean themselves over several days. However, doing so carries a risk of breakthrough withdrawal symptoms, and usually a return to full-blown drinking. Plus, the danger for some is that resuming alcohol consumption isn't enough to stop withdrawal symptoms.

That's why it's vitally important to talk to your doctor about how to manage alcohol withdrawal. Factors in deciding how to manage alcohol withdrawal treatment include your health, the duration of your alcohol use and how much alcohol you consume daily. Your doctor may determine it's necessary to use medications in the supervised setting of a hospital. Medications can help to minimize

withdrawal symptoms and prevent complications that might otherwise jeopardize your life. Treatment in an inpatient setting gives you access to immediate care if needed.

Coming clean

Prolonged heavy drinking increases the risk of many serious health problems, including liver disease, heart disease, certain neurological problems, pancreatitis and certain forms of cancer. Deciding to deal with a drinking problem – with the help of your doctor – is a serious but important commitment to your health.

Assessing alcohol use: Answering four questions may help you determine if alcohol is a problem for you. The questions are commonly called the CAGE assessment – CAGE represents the first letters of the key words listed in bold letters.

- *Have you ever felt you ought to cut down on your drinking?*
- *Have people annoyed you by criticizing your drinking?*
- *Have you ever felt bad or guilty about your drinking?*
- *Have you ever had an “eye-opener” drink first thing in the morning to steady your nerves or help get rid of a hangover?*

Answering yes to two question is a strong indication of alcoholism. Answering yes to three strongly suggests alcoholism.

Mayo Clinic Health Letter, June 2005, Volume 23, Number 6.

GRAPES AND BREAST CANCER: WHO KNEW?

The skins of red and purple grapes contain high amounts of resveratrol, an antioxidant that may protect against breast cancer, according to a recent study in the *European Journal of Cancer Prevention* (April).

Researchers interviewed 369 breast cancer patients and 602 controls about their eating habits and then calculated the amount of resveratrol their diets provided. They found that women who consumed the most resveratrol on a daily basis reduced their breast cancer risk by 45 percent compared to those who consumed the least. While the amount of resveratrol in grapes varies, those women who reduced their risk the most ate the equivalent of about a half-cup of grapes a day (that's about 20 grapes.)

Mamm Magazine July/August 2005

A VIRUS THAT KILLS TUMORS

A genetically engineered herpes virus was able to destroy cancer cells without harming normal tissue, scientists reported April 19 at a meeting of the American Association for Cancer Research.

In a phase I/II trial of 26 patients with various late-stage tumors – including breast cancer - many displayed tumor necrosis (death) after treatment with the oncolytic or “cancer-killing” virus, named OncoVEX GM-CSF.

Other oncolytic viruses have shown a similar ability to infect and kill tumor cells. But the OncoVEX virus appeared to produce an added effect, triggering an immune response in tumors throughout the body.

The OncoVEX virus was able to do this by producing a protein, called granulocyte macrophage colony stimulating factor (GM-CFS), which activates the immune system to produce white blood cells then attack the virally infected tumors as well as others spread around the body.

Mamm Magazine July/August 2005

LHI of Houston, Inc.
P O Box 130158
Houston, TX 77219-0158

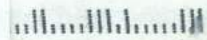


Address Correction Requested



Porey Anderson
1619 N. Spring St
Houston, TX 77008

77006+4113



**OCTOBER IS BREAST CANCER AWARENESS
MONTH**