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Heart to Heart Talk

With Philip S. Chua, M.D

Does cellphone use damage sperm?

Hungarian scientists, in a London report, stated that the use of mobile phone may adversely affect men's fertility. The study conducted on 221 men showed that simply carrying a cellphone in hip pocket or in a holster, even on standby mode, could cut the sperm count by nearly 30% and diminish its quality. A similar negative effect on the quality and quantity of sperm was noted among those workers constantly exposed to car exhaust fumes that pollute the environment. These observations need to be validated by more extensive scientific studies before it could be accepted as a medical fact.

Bird Flu mutant virus more deadly to humans?

Infectious disease experts based in China found that tests on mice revealed that the H5N1 strain of the avian flu, which has killed millions of chicken has been mutating fairly rapidly over the years to be more dangerous to humans. It was in 1997 in Hong Kong when the virus was transmitted from birds to humans, killing 5 of the 18 infected. Since then, human transfer has been reported in Vietnam and Thailand. The great fear is the bird virus might combine (gene swap) with the human flu virus in a person's body, resulting in a deadly mutant flu virus, a potent hybrid, that could rapidly spread around the world, leading to a devastating pandemic of the killer flu. So far, bird to human transfer is rare, and human to human transfer is unheard of.

Can we do self-CPR?

Yes, we can, although certified Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) instructors often do not emphasize this important maneuver. While I have reported this in a previous column a few months ago, self-CPR is so vital to all of us that it is worth repeating. When you feel chest discomfort or pressure sensation in your chest, and/or irregular or skipped heart beats, and a sensation of impending doom (heart attack?), with or without cold clammy sweating, with or without shortness of breath or dizziness, take a good deep breath and cough vigorously (as if trying to spit out phlegm in your lungs) every two or 3 seconds. Continue taking good deep breaths and coughing vigorously. Taking deep breaths will provide oxygen to your heart and all other vital organs, and coughing violently will squeeze the heart to

promote more effective circulation as it controls skipped beats or irregular heart beat. These, after all, are the goals of CPR. Don't stop doing these two maneuvers until you feel better and your heart rhythm is regular. Take two tablets of regular aspirin (unless you are allergic to aspirin or previously advised against taking aspirin by your physician), and immediately proceed to the nearest emergency room. (In the USA, calling 911 guarantees the speedy arrival of emergency help, fully-equipped with drugs, monitors, defibrillator, etc. Here, the best is to go to the ER ourselves, asap.) The aspirin is a mild blood thinner that will prevent blood clots and help the blood flow to your heart coronary arteries and other tissues. I strongly recommend that CPR (and self-CPR) be an official (required) part of our school curriculum, starting from the elementary education. In the meantime, let us teach this simple life-saving technique to our family and friends. Who knows, you might be saving your own life or that of a loved one, with self-CPR or CPR.

Is the Adkin's Diet dangerous to health?

On September 29, 2003, we wrote that the Adkin's diet, which advocates a diet of unlimited saturated fats and cholesterol (eggs, red meats, dairy products) and low carbohydrate (for weight-control), "neglected to focus on the adverse health effects of such high-fat, high-cholesterol intake, as they relate to the increased risk of heart attack, stroke and other cardiovascular diseases," and that "controlling the weight is only one of the essential factors towards a healthier body".

I also stated that I "fully agree that eating a lot of carbohydrates (like white rice, refined sugar, pasta, bread, and especially sweets, and non-diet soft drinks!) could easily add pounds to your weight and inches to your waistline, which is unhealthy...However, advocating a high-fat diet instead is, to me, almost as ridiculous, unhealthy and unsafe as encouraging people to smoke marijuana or shabu instead of cigarettes."

The Philippine College of Physicians, in a recent forum, repudiated the Adkin's Diet as unhealthy, especially for the young, as a food regimen that will increase the risk of heart attack, stroke, kidney disease, etc. A low-cholesterol, high-fiber diet, consisting mainly of fish, vegetables, beans, nuts, grains, is by far the healthiest science has known.

Is there an aphrodisiac for women?

No, there is none for women and none for men, either. Viagra, Cialis and Levitra, which are prescribed for men with erectile dysfunction (ED), are not aphrodisiacs (substances that directly cause increase in libido or sexual desire). These 3 drugs for the treatment of ED in men only act to promote blood flow and congestion in the male organ to result in more engorgement and effective erection. They do not directly lead to increased libido. They do help, psychologically. Their use has been limited to men with ED, although studies are currently going on to test their effect on women. A recent Canadian study in experimental rats appears to

show that PT-141, a research drug manufactured by Palatin Technologies, Inc., may, in fact, increase sexual desire in female rats. Following injection with the substance, the female rats flirted more with male rats and repeatedly tried to mount them. Sounds promising, but there is yet not enough scientific data to support this finding, and, obviously, no clinical (human) testing has been done using PT-141. The search for aphrodisiac (and for the elusive fountain of youth) will undoubtedly go on.

Is Ellagic Acid anti-cancerous?

A naturally-occurring phytochemical pesticide in several types of plant species, Ellagic Acid is a phenol compound that has the reputation of having anti-carcinogenic/anti-mutagenic properties. This compound functions to regulate plant growth, seed germination, and is said to be antibacterial. It also protects the plants from insects and larvae, and from the cancer-causing heavy metal poisons polluting our environment. Studies have shown since the 1990s that Ellagic Acid probably provides health benefits to humans also. The Ellagic Acid reportedly acts as a scavenger that binds with cancer-causing chemicals, rendering them “inactive” and harmless. Red raspberry and “two strawberry varieties (Tribute and Delite strawberries) developed by USDA scientists in Beltsville, Maryland,” are said to be rich in Ellagic acid. More laboratory and randomized, double-blind clinical human studies are needed to confirm this initial finding.

Are “breast-enlarging” cream effective?

Contrary to the popular ads on television (featuring Japanese women) that promise rapid breast augmentation with the use of “specially formulated hormone cream,” there is really no known lotion, potion, jelly, salve, or drugs today that can safely cause breast enlargement. The cream may cause some temporary breast tissue “engorgement” but this is an “induced reaction” that is not healthy and could be outright dangerous. Hormonal alteration in a person can increase the risk for the development of illnesses, like cancer. Today, beauty aids, including padded bras and naturally-looking flesh-tone breast augmentation cups, are sold at many shops for women. These can provide the same external physical look and effect, and are obviously a lot safer and a lot less expensive for those who want to wear them. Besides, a man who truly loves his woman finds her attractive and loves her, regardless...

Why is eating an apple a day healthy?

Apples are rich in a nutrient known as quercetin, and eating at least an apple a day help protect the body in more ways than one. Regular apple intake is associated with lower risk for lung cancer, diabetes and asthma. Eating the (very thoroughly washed) apple with the skin (where the greatest amount of quercetin is

stored) is the way to do it. Obviously, the axiom “an apple a day keeps the doctor away” is true.