WellNews: Red means stop

by Scott_LaFee

The flushed, red faces of some drinkers could be a sign they're at greater risk of throat cancer, say researchers at the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

The flushing response, which can be accompanied by nausea and a rapid heartbeat, is primarily caused by an inherited deficiency in an enzyme called ALDH2, which results in difficulties in metabolizing alcohol and an accumulation of toxic acetaldehyde in the body.

That toxic buildup may lead to squamous cell esophageal cancer, said Dr. Philip J. Brooks, which can be surgically treated. The survival rate, however, is very low.

Moderate drinking increases the risk, but heavy consumption is especially problematic. An ALDH2-deficient person who has two beers a day is six to 10 times more likely to develop esophageal cancer than a person not deficient in the enzyme.

ALDH2 deficiency is a trait shared by more than one-third of people of East Asian ancestry (Japanese, Chinese, Korean).

BEST MEDICINE

A surgeon was checking on a patient who had a hernia operation three days earlier. The doctor asked the man why he hadn't yet gotten out of bed.

"I hurt," answered the patient. "You don't know how it feels."

"Yes I do," replied the doctor. "I had the same procedure last month, and I was back at work two days later. There's no difference in our operations."

"Oh yes there is," said the patient. "You had a different surgeon."

OBSERVATION

What we feel and think and are is to a great extent determined by the state of our ductless glands and viscera.

â€” British writer Aldous Huxley

PHOBIA OF THE WEEK

Gephysrophobia â€” fear of crossing bridges

BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

Palak Vyas of Great Britain is believed to have managed the world's quickest recorded birthing. She was in labor just 2 minutes, giving birth to a healthy 7-pound, 2-ounce daughter after just one push.

GET ME THAT. STAT!

A new British study of 900,000 adults found that even moderate obesity, defined as a body mass index of 30 to 35, takes two to four years off life expectancy. Severe obesity cuts eight to 10 years.

NUMBER CRUNCHER

A large, toasted plain bagel (123 grams) contains 354 calories, 19 from fat. It has 2.1 grams of total fat or 3 percent of the recommended total fat intake for a 2,000-calorie daily diet.

It also contains no cholesterol; 590 milligrams of sodium (25 percent); 70 grams of total carbohydrates (23 percent); 3.2 g of dietary fiber (13 percent); 7.2 g of sugar and 13 g of protein.

MEDTRONICA

Body mass index calculator

nhlbisupport.com/bmi/

There are lots of online body mass index (BMI) calculators out there; this one by the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute is very simple to use (and has a Spanish version).

CURTAIN CALLS

The Roman emperor Claudius I (10 B.C.-A.D. 54) choked to death on a feather stuck down his throat to help him vomit up some bad (possibly poisoned) mushrooms served to him by his wife.

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