WellNews: All the news that's fit

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MEDTRONICA

Internet Health Resources

www.ihr.com

This is a wide-ranging site that covers the issues of infertility, from basic biological causes to treatments to alternatives like adoption.

BLOWING AWAY DISEASE

It's estimated that one in 10 patients will get sick - or rather, sicker - from something they contract while staying at a hospital. So-called nosocomial infections are bad news, resulting in the deaths of thousands of Americans each year at a cost of billions of dollars.

Experts say at least one-third of nosocomial cases are preventable. A new study suggests one of the best ways to prevent them is also one of the simplest: Open a window.

HOSPITAL ILLNESS - It's estimated that one in 10 patients will get sick - or rather, sicker - from something they contract while staying at a hospital. CNS Photo.

MEDTRONICA - The Medtronica Internet Health Resources Web site at www.ihr.com is a wide-ranging

site that covers issues of infertility. CNS Photo.

Airborne infections such as tuberculosis, a scourge in some hospitals, spread best in closed spaces. Rod Escombe, a research fellow at the Imperial College in London, found that large hospital rooms with plenty of natural ventilation substantially reduced the transmission of tuberculosis and similar diseases. Escombe and colleagues examined eight hospitals in Lima, Peru. Wards built more than 50 years ago, with large windows and old-fashioned high ceilings, had better ventilation than modern rooms with mechanical ventilation.

Escombe estimated that in mechanically ventilated rooms (forced heat and air), 39 percent of susceptible people are likely to become infected after 24 hours of exposure to an untreated TB patient. But the figure dropped to 33 percent in a modern hospital room with open windows and just 11 percent in a pre-1950s-style room with large, open windows. Natural ventilation more than doubles the exchange of air, the researchers said, effectively reducing the amount of airborne TB bacteria needed to successfully infect most people. The findings have broad implications. With fears of a looming influenza pandemic, the researchers suggest open windows may be an effective way to diminish disease transmission.

GET ME THAT. STAT!

The odds of being struck by a meteorite are about 1 in 10 trillion, but the odds of being struck by falling space debris are just 1 in 5 billion.

NEVER SAY DIET

For a time, Henry Ford (1863-1947) ate weed sandwiches every day because he had heard that George Washington Carver (1864-1943), the noted American scientist and dietitian, had done the same.

PHOBIA OF THE WEEK

Bromidrosiphobia - fear of body odor

BEST MEDICINE

Doctor: What seems to be the trouble?

Patient: I'm not sure anybody can hear me?

Doctor: What seems to be the trouble?

OBSERVATION

No physician is really good before he has killed one or two patients.

- Hindu Proverb

BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

You have about 4,000 wax glands in each ear.

TODAY'S SAFETY TIP

Some advice for negotiating slippery streets and surfaces, courtesy of the Mount Sinai School of Medicine's department of orthopedics:

1. Move your feet ever so slightly apart as you walk. This will give you better balance. If the street is really slippery, bend your knees a little bit.

2. If you're going down an incline, turn sideways. Bend your knees. Don't cross one foot over the other. It reduces your balance.

3. Protect your dominant arm, just in case of a fall. Hold something in your dominant hand, such as a coat or umbrella. If you fall, you will instinctively use the other, weaker hand to break it.

LAST WORDS

I can't sleep.

- James M. Barrie, British novelist and creator of "Peter Pan" (1860-1937)

WEIGHT AND HEADACHES

Extra pounds can be a real headache. Literally. Doctors at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York found that overweight people were about 25 percent more likely to get headaches 10 to 15 days a month. Many of these pains are caused by blood-vessel inflammation, and overweight people are more prone to it. Exercise and a low-fat diet can help you cut inflammation and lose the weight.

SECONDHAND SMOKE

There is no safe level of secondhand smoke, says the most recent report by the U.S. surgeon general, who calls it a "serious health hazard." Nearly half of all nonsmoking Americans are regularly exposed to tobacco smoke, which increases their risk of lung cancer and heart disease by about 30 percent. Even brief exposure can endanger young children (asthma and infections) or adults who have heart disease or are at high risk for it.