

by Scott LaFee

MEDTRONICA Acne Care www.acne-care.com A bit basic, but a good place to begin learning about the causes of and treatments for acne (plus there's a link to a guide on warts). The information is straightforward, without hype or ads - the latter being all too common on other acne sites.

BODY OF KNOWLEDGE Starvation kills, but sleep deprivation kills faster. Most people, it's estimated, could last almost a month without food but would die after only 10 days without sleep.

GET ME THAT. STAT! Half of the world's nations do not screen blood donations for HIV or hepatitis, according to a survey conducted by the World Health Organization.

HYPOCHONDRIAC'S GUIDE Alien hand syndrome is a neurological impairment in which one's hand seems to have a mind of its own and on occasion may attempt to choke its owner to death. Actually, the intent isn't always malevolent. Instead, the hand may unbutton clothing at inopportune moments, poke you in the eye or knock food from your mouth. There is no precise cause. The syndrome can be produced by a brain tumor, brain injury or brain infection. There is no treatment, either, though sometimes the symptoms go away on their own.

SAY WHAT? A study by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health asserts that women hear better than men, that black adults hear better than white adults, and that hearing in general in the United States is no better or worse than it was 35 years ago. Some of the study's results are similar to previous findings, but the sampling - more than 5,000 people taking hearing tests between 1999 and 2004 - is the largest ever. The racial difference in hearing, study researcher William Murphy said, could be related to differing levels of melanin, a darkening skin pigment. Some scientists have argued that melanin plays a role in removing harmful chemical compounds in the body, including those that can cause damage to the sensitive hair cells in the inner ear. More melanin, presumably, would remove more damaging compounds. On the other hand, gender differences in hearing are probably due to the amount of noise exposure people experience growing up, Elliot Berger, a hearing protection expert, told the Associated Press. "Boys have typically done noisier activities," he said. The finding that overall hearing in the United States has not declined contradicts other studies, however. Earlier studies have claimed Americans do not hear as well as in the past, due in large part to the ubiquitous use of iPods, Walkmans and the like played at excessively loud volumes.

PHOBIA OF THE WEEK Rhytophobia - fear of getting wrinkles

DIAGNOSES "Forensic Detective" by Robert Mann. Published by Ballantine Books, 253 pages, \$24.95. Mann, a physical anthropologist, is deputy scientific director of the U.S. Central Identification Laboratory and, as such, has plenty of stories to tell. Some of them are told here, tales of often grisly forensic sleuthing at crime scenes, natural disasters and long-ago battlefields. A casebook for "CSI" aficionados but not for the faint of heart.

BEST MEDICINE A guy spots his doctor in a shopping mall. He stops him and says, "Six weeks ago when I was in your office, you told me to go home, get into bed and stay there until you called. You never called." "I didn't?" replied the doctor. "Then what are you doing out of bed?" Copley News Service