

## Lifewire: Child abuse and neglect increases during wartime

by Ven\_Griva

Members of the U.S. military are not alone in facing danger when they are deployed in a war zone. A new study shows that more Army children find themselves in harm's way when a parent is sent to the front in the war on terror.

The study, prepared by researchers at RTI International and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Public Health, shows that the rate of child abuse and neglect rises significantly while a military parent is deployed in a combat zone.

The study appears in the Aug. 1 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

Researchers analyzed data gathered from nearly 2,000 Army families with confirmed incidents of child abuse or neglect. Researchers compared data gathered while enlisted soldiers were at home and while they were in combat from late 2001 through 2004.

The study, funded by the U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command, shows that the rate of child abuse and neglect was more than 40 percent higher while a soldier-parent was in combat than when he or she was at home.

"Because this study measured incidents of child abuse and neglect within individual families during times of deployment and non-deployment, the evidence is pretty strong that combat-related deployments are responsible for the increase," said Deborah Gibbs, a senior health analyst at RTI and the study's lead author. "These findings were consistent, regardless of parents' age, rank or ethnic background, indicating that deployments are difficult for all kinds of families."

The greatest increase in the rate of child abuse and neglect occurred when soldier-husbands deployed, leaving mothers at home to care for children. In these cases, the rate of physical abuse nearly doubled, and the rate of neglect, in which parents fail to properly care for children, was nearly four times higher.

"Although many military families manage to cope with the stress created by combat deployments, in other families this stress significantly impairs the parents' ability to care for their children appropriately," said study co-author Sandra Martin, professor in the Department of Child and Maternal Health at UNC's School of Public Health.

"The Army is very aware of these issues, and they're working hard to support families during deployments," Gibbs said. "Our study confirms that supportive services are needed for families of deployed soldiers and that those services need to be provided in a way that encourages parents who are having difficulties to take advantage of them."

## BETTER BLUES

People with dieting blues should try swapping white corn tortillas for blue. The colored flatbreads are healthier, especially for diabetics and dieters, says a report in the July 30 issue *Chemistry & Industry* magazine.

Scientists in Mexico found that tortillas made from blue corn had less starch and a lower glycemic index than white corn tortillas. They also found that the blue tortillas had 20 percent more protein than white.

The glycemic index ranks carbohydrates according to their effects on blood glucose levels. Foods with a lower glycemic index are considered healthier as they slowly release sugar into the bloodstream. This reduces fluctuations in blood glucose and insulin levels, helping to maintain a steady supply of energy.

But the real secret might be that blue corn tortillas get their color from anthocyanins, which are also found in blackberries, blueberries, plums, raisins, eggplant, purple cabbage and red wine.

"They may have antioxidant and anti-aging benefits and may help with memory, urinary tract health and reduced cancer risk," according to the American Dietetic Association's Complete Food and Nutrition Guide.

Juscelino Tovar, one of the study's authors, said that one important benefit of the lower glycemic index blue tortillas is their potential role in preventing or controlling metabolic syndrome, a combination of disorders which increase the risk of heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

Metabolic syndrome is increasingly being recognized by researchers in the medical field. It is characterized by a group of metabolic risk factors in one person. They include:

- High body mass index, or BMI, especially when coupled with excessive abdominal fat.

- Hypertension, or high blood pressure.

- Blood fat disorders, such as high triglycerides, low HDL cholesterol and high LDL cholesterol.

- Insulin resistance and the inability of the body to properly process sugar.

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