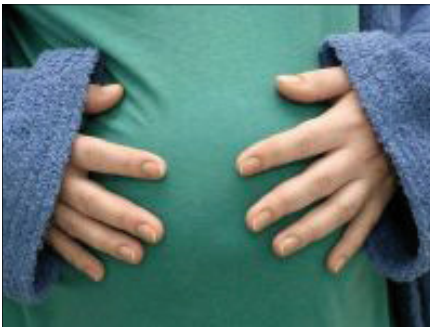


Weight advice during pregnancy 'lacking'



A survey by the Royal College of Midwives and website, NetMums, has found that many pregnant women in the UK are not being advised about managing their weight.

The survey showed that 63% of women reported that their midwife had not talked to them about obesity and body mass index at their first appointment.

The survey, which involved 6,226 women, also discovered that 60% of the respondents said they felt under pressure by celebrity culture to lose weight after they had a baby.

Pregnant women who fall into the obese category have more danger of conditions such as pre-eclampsia and gestational diabetes.

They also have a higher risk of miscarriage, premature birth and caesareans. Around

50% of women of childbearing age in the UK are either overweight or obese.

The poll found that around half of the women said they were concerned about their weight during pregnancy.

Many women said they did not know what they right weight should be and 90% said that after they had given birth they were not able to talk about their worries with the midwife.

The poll found that 84% said the weight management advice from their midwife was "not good" and 73% said they thought the health service should offer antenatal classes to address the subject.

Sally Russell, a co-founder of Netmums.com, said: "The results from this survey are a wake-up call to midwives to support women better throughout their pregnancy and inform them of their options."

16681

Sense of smell linked to obesity



According to a new study by researchers at the University of Portsmouth, overweight people have a keener sense of smell than those of a normal weight.

The study, which is in its early stages, could contribute to scientists' understanding about why some people have trouble remaining a healthy weight.

The research, which was published in the journal *Chemical Senses*, examined the link between smell and weight.

Scientists have already proved that the area of the brain which handles data about smells is linked to areas which control hunger.

In the UK, 25% of adults are obese and experts are worried that this number will increase in the future as more people gain weight.

Dr Lorenzo Stafford and his team asked 64 participants to be involved in a number of

experiments to test how well their senses of smell worked.

The research revealed that the participants had an improved sense of smell after they had eaten rather than when they were hungry.

The team also found that overweight participants had a much keener sense of smell than slimmer participants, particularly after they had eaten.

Dr Stafford said: "It could be speculated that for those with a propensity to gain weight, their higher sense of smell for food related odours might actually play a more active role in food intake."

"Hopefully this research will stimulate more work in this area with the potential to help those who struggle with their weight and those who treat people with weight problems."

16696

A clove of garlic a day recommended



The British Heart Foundation has urged caution over a study which has suggested that garlic may help in the treatment of high blood pressure.

Researchers from the University of Adelaide in Australia say that the substance may be a useful in addition to medication to treat high blood pressure.

But the BHF said that while garlic had been used for medicinal purposes for thousands of years, it was important that more scientific research was carried out to prove that it could help conditions such as raised blood pressure.

BHF senior cardiac nurse Ellen Mason said: "This study demonstrated a slight blood pressure reduction after using aged garlic supplements but its not significant enough or in a large enough group of people to currently recommend it instead of medication.

"It's a concern that so many people in the UK have poorly controlled blood pressure, with an increased risk of stroke and heart disease as a consequence. So enjoy garlic as part of your diet but don't stop taking your blood pressure medication."

For the latest study, the Australian team focussed on 50 patients in a trial to see if garlic supplements could help those whose blood pressure was high, despite medication.

Writing in the scientific journal *Maturitas*, they said that those given four capsules of garlic extract a day for 12 weeks had lower blood pressure than those who were on placebo.

They found systolic blood pressure was around 10mmHg lower in the group given garlic compared with those given a placebo.

GPs want more time with patients

A new survey has suggested more than that 90% of GPs would like to spend more time with their patients per appointment.

The survey of 200 GPs by Aviva UK health found nearly all GPs questioned (97%) said they would like to spend more time with each patient, with 69% stating they would like to see the average appointment increased to 15 minutes, and 24% wanting more than 15 minutes. The current NHS standard requires GP appointment times are kept to 10 minutes, with GPs spending an average of seven minutes per patient.

16734

Mouth ulcer gel developed from bee resin

Researchers from the University of Bradford have created a gel treatment for mouth ulcers that uses a mixture of resin and wax used by honey bees to sterilise their hives.

The healing properties of propolis have been known for years but now the British scientists have found a way of purifying the medicinal mixture so that it will dissolve in water and lose its pungent odour. The technique has already led to the development of a new mouth ulcer gel and opens the door to a huge range of other pharmaceutical products.

16741

Cancer drug dose clue from cough syrup

New research has suggested that giving breast cancer patients cough syrup might tell doctors how well they will respond to a vital drug.

Because women often respond differently to Tamoxifen – which has helped improve survival rates over the last two decades – it can mean they need a higher dose to get the same effect.

The UK charity Breakthrough Breast Cancer say that the research from a team at the Erasmus Medical Centre in Rotterdam might help cut side effects for patients.

16750

Rates of suicide and depression on rise



The human cost of Britain's economic downturn is being reflected in rising rates of suicide and depression.

The trend comes to light as Prime Minister David Cameron prepares plans to measure the sense of general wellbeing across the country.

After years where the suicide rate has fallen, figures for 2008 show the number of people killing themselves rose by 329 to 5,706 marking the first rise for a decade.

Suicide rates among men went up from 16.8 per 100,000 people in 2007 to 17.7 per 100,000 in 2008 while the rate among women rose from 5 per 100,000 people to 5.4 per 100,000.

The data coincides with new figures on those claiming incapacity benefit for depression, which has risen by 15,000 on the previous year to 427,000 and is believed to cost the economy £9.2 billion a year in lost earnings.

Liberal Democrat MP Jo Swinson, who obtained the figures, said: "Years of failure to tackle the condition is hitting us all in the pocket. It can force some sufferers out of work now and make reemployment more difficult in the future, which costs the public and private sector billions."

The issue of suicide rates and the economy have also been raised in the House of Commons.

Care services minister Paul Burstow said: "There is plenty of evidence across the world that in times of recession and high unemployment, rates of mental illness and suicide tend to rise."

He said it was important to ensure that "ensure that economic recovery is matched by psychological recovery" from the recession.

16736