

THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF MEDICINE

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New Study Indicates Moderate Exercise May Protect Against Colds

October 26, 2006 – A moderate exercise program may reduce the incidence of colds. A study published in the November issue of *The American Journal of Medicine*, led by researchers at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, found that otherwise sedentary women who engaged in moderate exercise had fewer colds over a one year period than a control group.

Subjects in a group of 115 overweight and obese, sedentary, postmenopausal women were randomly assigned to either a moderate exercise program (45 minutes per day, five days per week and comprised of mostly brisk walking) or to a once-weekly 45 minute stretching session. Both the exercisers and the stretchers filled out questionnaires every 3 months on the number of episodes of allergies, upper respiratory tract infections (colds and flu) and other infections. Subjects were taught how to distinguish various forms of infections and were followed for one year.

Over 12 months, the risk of colds decreased modestly in exercisers and increased modestly in stretchers. In the final three months of the study, the risk of colds in stretchers was more than 3-fold higher than that of exercisers. More stretchers than exercisers had at least one cold during the 12-month study period (48.4% vs 30.2%), and among women reporting at least one cold, stretchers tended to report colds more frequently than exercisers.

Senior author Cornelia M. Ulrich, PhD, of the Hutchinson Center, writes, “Our trial is the first to report on the effects of a year-long, moderate-intensity exercise training program on the incidence of upper respiratory tract infections. Although we did not find an effect overall on upper respiratory tract infections, our study suggests that moderate-intensity training can reduce

the risk of colds in postmenopausal, nonsmoking, overweight or obese women. This finding is of clinical relevance and adds a new facet to the growing literature on the health benefits of moderate exercise.”

The study is “Moderate-Intensity Exercise Reduces the Incidence of Colds Among Postmenopausal Women” by Jessica Chubak MBHL, Anne McTiernan MD PhD, Bess Sorensen MS, Mark H. Wener MD, Yutaka Yasui PhD, Mariebeth Velasquez BS, Brent Wood MD PhD, Kumar B. Rajan MS, Catherine M. Wetmore MPH, John D. Potter MD PhD, and Cornelia M. Ulrich PhD, and comes from the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, Cancer Prevention Program, Seattle, Wash; University of Washington, Departments of Epidemiology, Medicine, and Laboratory Medicine, Seattle, Wash; University of Alberta, Department of Public Health Sciences, Edmonton, Alberta; University of New Mexico, Department of Psychiatry, Albuquerque, NM; University of Washington, Department of Biostatistics, Seattle, Wash. It appears in *The American Journal of Medicine*, Volume 119, Issue 11 (November 2006), published by Elsevier.

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Full text of the article mentioned above is available upon request. Contact ajmmmedia@elsevier.com to obtain copies or to schedule an interview.

THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF MEDICINE, Volume 119:11

AJM Theme Issue: Infectious Disease (indicates themed articles) CONTENTS**

EDITORIAL

Can Exercise Prevent the Common Cold? **
Richard Ruffin and Paul D. Thompson

COMMENTARY

Katrina's Dance
Dhruv S. Kazi

REVIEW

Aldosterone Blockade: an Emerging Strategy for Abrogating Progressive Renal Disease
Murray Epstein

DIAGNOSTIC DILEMMAS

Hypercalcemia and Lymphadenopathy
John Koethe and Piotr Kulesza

A Long and Bumpy Road

Reza Ardehali, Ann S. Reed, Christopher Owens, Glenn R. Meininger, John V. Conte, and Joshua M. Hare

IMAGES IN DERMATOLOGY

Molluscum or a Mimic? **

Jonas A. de Souza

Beseiged

Maya Haasz, Michael Bonnycastle, Joe Dylewski, and Lucie Opatrny

ECG IMAGE OF THE MONTH

Sudden Death on the Treadmill

Adam M. Sabbath and Julia H. Indik

IMAGES IN RADIOLOGY

Biologic Blunder

Amgad N. Makaryus and Lawrence Boxt

CLINICAL RESEARCH STUDIES

Moderate-Intensity Exercise Reduces the Incidence of Colds Among Postmenopausal Women **

Jessica Chubak, Anne McTiernan, Bess Sorensen, Mark H. Wener, Yutaka Yasui, Mariebeth Velasquez, Brent Wood, Kumar B. Rajan, Catherine M. Wetmore, John D. Potter, and Cornelia M. Ulrich

Fifteen-Year Study of the Changing Epidemiology of Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus aureus **

Nancy F. Crum, Rachel U. Lee, Scott A Thornton, O. Colin Stine, Mark R. Wallace, Chris Barrozo, Ananda Keefer-Norris, Sharon Judd, and Kevin L. Russell

Prognostic Value of Low Blood Glucose at the Presentation of E. coli Bacteremia **

Shamsuddin Alamgir, Natalia B. Volkova, and Michael W. Peterson

Fluoroquinolone-Resistant Escherichia coli in the Long-Term Care Setting **

Alana E. Cohen, Ebbing Lautenbach, Knashawn H. Morales, and Darren R. Linkin

Coccidioidomycosis in Patients with Diabetes Mellitus **

Ana C. Santelli, Janis E. Blair, and Lori R. Roust

Benefit of Appropriate Empirical Antibiotic Treatment: Thirty-Day Mortality and Duration of Hospital Stay **

Abigail Fraser, Mical Paul, Nadja Almanasreh, Evelina Tacconelli, Uwe Frank, Roberto Cauda, Sara Borok, Michal Cohen, Steen Andreassen, Anders D. Nielsen, and Leonard Leibovici

Long-Term Outcome of HBV Carriers with Negative HBe Antigen and Normal Aminotransferase **

Kenji Ikeda, Yasuji Arase, Satoshi Saitoh, Masahiro Kobayashi, Takashi Someya, Tetsuya Hosaka, Hitomi Sezaki, Norio Akuta, Yoshiyuki Suzuki, Fumitaka Suzuki, and Hiromitsu Kumada

A Katrina Experience: Lessons Learned

Mary Currier, Deborah S. King, Marion R. Wofford, Bethany J. Daniel, and Richard deShazo

AJM ONLINE

CLINICAL RESEARCH STUDY

Caspofungin for Invasive Candidiasis at a Tertiary Care Medical Center **

Aimee K. Zaas, Elizabeth S. Dodds Ashley, Barbara D. Alexander, Melissa D. Johnson, and John R. Perfect

BRIEF OBSERVATIONS

Conservative Treatment of Staphylococcal Prosthetic Joint Infections in Elderly Patients **

José Barberán, Lorenzo Aguilar, Guillermo Carroquino, María -José Giménez, Beatriz Sánchez, David Martínez, and José Prieto

Coccidioidomycosis in Pregnancy: Case Report and Review of the Literature **

Nancy F. Crum and Gonzalo Ballon-Landa

The following articles are available only in the online version of the Journal.

CLINICAL COMMUNICATIONS TO THE EDITOR

Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus aureus Suppurative Thyroiditis with Thyrotoxicosis

Kristine Lethert, Jennifer Bowerman, Allan Pont, Karen Earle, and Richard Garcia-Kennedy

Scrotal Swelling and Sarcoidosis

Bobbak Vahid, Sandra Weibel, and Christopher Nguyen

Myelodysplastic Syndrome Manifesting As Sweet's Syndrome and Bronchiolitis Obliterative Organizing Pneumonia

Rajeev Garg, Youssef Soud, Rajiv Lal, Niraj Mehta, and Bruce C. Kone

Is Anemia in Plasmodium vivax Malaria More Frequent and Severe Than in Plasmodium Falciparum? **

Alfonso J. Rodríguez-Morales, Elia Sánchez, Miguel Vargas, Carmelina Piccolo, Rosa Colina, Melissa Arria, Carlos Franco-Paredes, Irene S. Sonu, Kevin P. High, Charles P. Clayton, Nancy F. Woolard, and William R. Hazzard

APM PERSPECTIVES

An Evaluation of Geriatrics Activities within Internal Medicine Subspecialties

Irene S. Sonu, Kevin P. High, Charles P. Clayton, Nancy F. Woolard, and William R. Hazzard

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