

# YourHealthNews

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## GENEROUS PEOPLE HAVE HAPPIER LIVES, STUDY REVEALS

We often delight ourselves with things that will make us happy. However, in a research study carried out at the University of Zurich revealed that generosity provides happier lives.<sup>1</sup>

In the study, fifty participants were each provided with 25 Swiss francs every week for a month. They were then randomly assigned to two groups – one that commits to spending the money on other people of their choice (experimental group), and the other spends the money on themselves (control group).



Data analyses showed that those who are in the experimental group reported to being happier compared to those who are in the control group.

By using an MRI scan, authors noted that there was enhanced activity in the temporo-parietal junction in those who were generous to spend their money to other people. They further noticed that neurons in this area activated nerve cells in the ventral striatum, a zone for happiness, which provides evidence of a neural connection of generosity and happiness.

## Rising obesity and overweight trends seen in a global study

The scourge of the obesity pandemic has long been in the limelight on the worldwide stage for decades.

In a current analysis<sup>2</sup> on a global data of estimated 70 million people from 195 nations, it found that the trends on overweight and obesity is continually rising. The alarming results showed that it is forecasted to be around 100 million children and 600 million adults were obese in 2015. Additionally, the universal prevalence rates were calculated to be 5% in children; whereas, in adults this is more than doubled to 12%.

In the national level, the prevalence rates in most countries were shown to have persistently escalated since 1980. Seventy-three nations were also revealed to have twofold rise in  
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## Artificial sweeteners may cause long-term weight gain

Artificial sweeteners have been used as an alternative to sugar in most products we consume. They have been considered to cause weight gain but previous studies provided conflicting results.

Findings from a recent research review<sup>3</sup> have just been published in the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*.

In this study, the authors reviewed and synthesized 37 studies – 7 experimental and 30 cohort studies involving more than 400,000 participants.

Based from their analyses, they found that consumption of artificial sweeteners do not help in weight management as it does not result in loss of weight. Instead, it may lead to long-term weight gain, the researchers warned.

Furthermore, they also claimed that consumption of these sugar alternatives may elevate the risk for developing cardiometabolic diseases such as hypertension and diabetes.

With the body of evidences stacking up on artificial sweeteners potential



risks, it is always safe to stick on the usual adage of health practitioners of consuming certain foods and beverages in moderation.

However, artificial sweeteners are often added to soft drinks or sodas as well.

Consumption of these products should instead be limited, as frequent intake of these drinks can contribute to erosion of tooth enamel, which can lead to tooth decay.

their prevalence rates.

Health effects of excess weight were also examined by the authors. They estimated that approximately 4 million deaths were attributable to high BMI (body mass index), a common tool that calculates an estimate of body fat as a proportion of one's height. Around 70% of these deaths among overweight and obese people were due to cardiovascular disease.

The overall disease burden of excess weight, as calculated through disability-adjusted life-years (DALYs), was also determined to be 120 million years lived with disability. Diabetes is the leading cause of years lived in disability related to excess weight, followed by musculoskeletal disorders and cardiovascular disease.

With all these outcomes, the investigators recommends the need to implement interventions to reduce prevalence and disease burden of overweight and obesity. To minimize the risk associated with excess weight, they supported a BMI between 20 and 25 should be achieved.

Attainment of this target BMI can be made possible by modifying one's personal lifestyle through regular exercise and consumption of a well-balanced and healthy diet.

Period pain or dysmenorrhea is characterized by the presence of crampy, colicky lower

abdominal pain occurring recurrently during menstruation. Although not life-threatening, women suffering menstrual cramps report decrease quality of life. Treatment is usually with oral analgesics.

A new research has emerged on the potential of using a traditional Chinese treatment, acupuncture, in managing women who experience period pains.

The study<sup>4</sup> led by experts from Western Sydney University and University of Auckland was voluntarily joined by 74 adult women aged 18-45 years old who have confirmed or suspected primary dysmenorrhea and were not

## Can acupuncture relieve period pain? Study says, yes!

diagnosed to have dysmenorrhea due to secondary causes such as endometriosis or uterine fibroids.

Volunteers were then randomly allocated to four treatment acupuncture wings. Two groups were given manual acupuncture; while the other two, were provided with electroacupuncture. Between each treatment modality, participants were given either a high frequency or low frequency treatment.

Women received 12 treatments over three menstrual cycles. Those in the high frequency group were given three acupuncture treatments a week prior to the start of their menstruation. On the other hand, the

low frequency group received three treatments every 7 to 10 days, between their

menstrual cycles.

Analysis of results showed that acupuncture in general reduces period pains during the first three days of menses and was sustained for twelve months. It also revealed that pain intensity, duration and symptoms of dysmenorrhea were lessened significantly and perceived quality of life were improved.

The authors conclude that acupuncture could benefit women with dysmenorrhea. However, they recommended that further larger studies are needed to identify guidelines and dosages needed for the treatment of period pain with acupuncture.

## Experts reveal that having a healthy lifestyle could make you live longer

It is often emphasized by visits to our GPs that having a healthy lifestyle lowers the risk of developing various chronic diseases like cardiovascular diseases, musculoskeletal disorders diabetes.

Interestingly, healthy lifestyle also improves longevity, as reported in a recent study<sup>5</sup> conducted by researchers from the University of Michigan.

Data scrutinized by the experts, from

the *Health and Retirement Study* that involved more than 14000 respondents aged between 50 and 74, showed that those who were nonsmoker, not obese and moderately drinks alcohol could live on average 7 years more compared to all other men and women in the study.

Aside from this benefit, they also found that non-obese men and women who never smoked and were

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moderate drinkers have the onset of disability delayed in contrast to their counterparts.

The benefit of quitting smoking was also emphasized in the findings. Investigators noted that respondents that are non-obese, moderate drinkers and who quit smoking 10 years or more before the survey was obtained were only a year less in the overall and disability-free life expectancies when compared to those non-obese, moderate drinkers and who never smoked.

With the overwhelming results in favor of healthy lifestyle, it is not too late to adopt such changes. It would only not improve our general well-being, but also increase life expectancy as well as a life of disable-free years.

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