

Health & Fitness

Your Health

Traffic jam

Sitting in traffic is tough on the nerves. It could also be hard on the heart. Researchers interviewed nearly 1,500 heart attack survivors living in the region of Germany around Augsburg. They were asked about what they'd been doing in the four days before their heart attacks.



About 8 percent said they'd been stuck in traffic a few hours before the attack. The lingering effect of traffic seemed to be worse in women and those with the chest pain known as angina.

What could be the connection between traffic and heart attacks? Anger and stress have been linked to spasms of coronary arteries, the sudden disruption of cholesterol-filled plaque and the initiation of unstable heart rhythms, any of which can trigger a heart attack. Air pollution is another possible culprit.

Eye on triglycerides

High triglycerides often take a back seat to a high level of harmful LDL cholesterol and a low level of protective HDL, but they are worth paying attention to on their own.

Fatty foods, rapidly digested carbohydrates, excess weight and some medications can boost triglycerides, the main fat-carrying particle in the bloodstream. You can keep them in check by cutting back on easily digested carbohydrates like white bread and mashed potatoes and eating more whole grains. Saturated and trans fats boost triglycerides, while unsaturated fats can lower them.

Eating fatty fish twice a week can help, as can exercise and losing weight if you're overweight.

Prevention pill?

Back in 2003, two British researchers suggested a simple approach to preventing heart disease: have everyone over age 50 take a daily "polypill" that contained three blood pressure-lowering drugs (an ACE inhibitor, a beta blocker and a diuretic), a statin for cholesterol, aspirin to prevent blood clots that lead to heart attacks and most strokes, and the vitamin folic acid. Containing low doses of widely used generic drugs, the pill would be safe and cheap.

Indian researchers set about testing it. They recruited more than 2,400 men and women without heart disease between the ages of 45 and 80 years. Some took a polypill they called the Polycap containing three beta blockers, a statin and aspirin. Others took a pill with one or more of the ingredients. After three months, the polypill had lowered systolic blood pressure (the top number of a blood pressure reading) a respectable seven points and harmful LDL by 12 points. The polypill didn't cause any more problems than pills containing just one or two of the ingredients.

In May, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration took a step toward a polypill by approving Exforge HCT for blood pressure control. It contains amlodipine, a calcium-channel blocker; valsartan, an angiotensin-receptor blocker; and hydrochlorothiazide, a diuretic.

— Harvard Heart Letter

Hidden danger

More college athletes to get tested for the potentially deadly sickle cell trait — Page 2

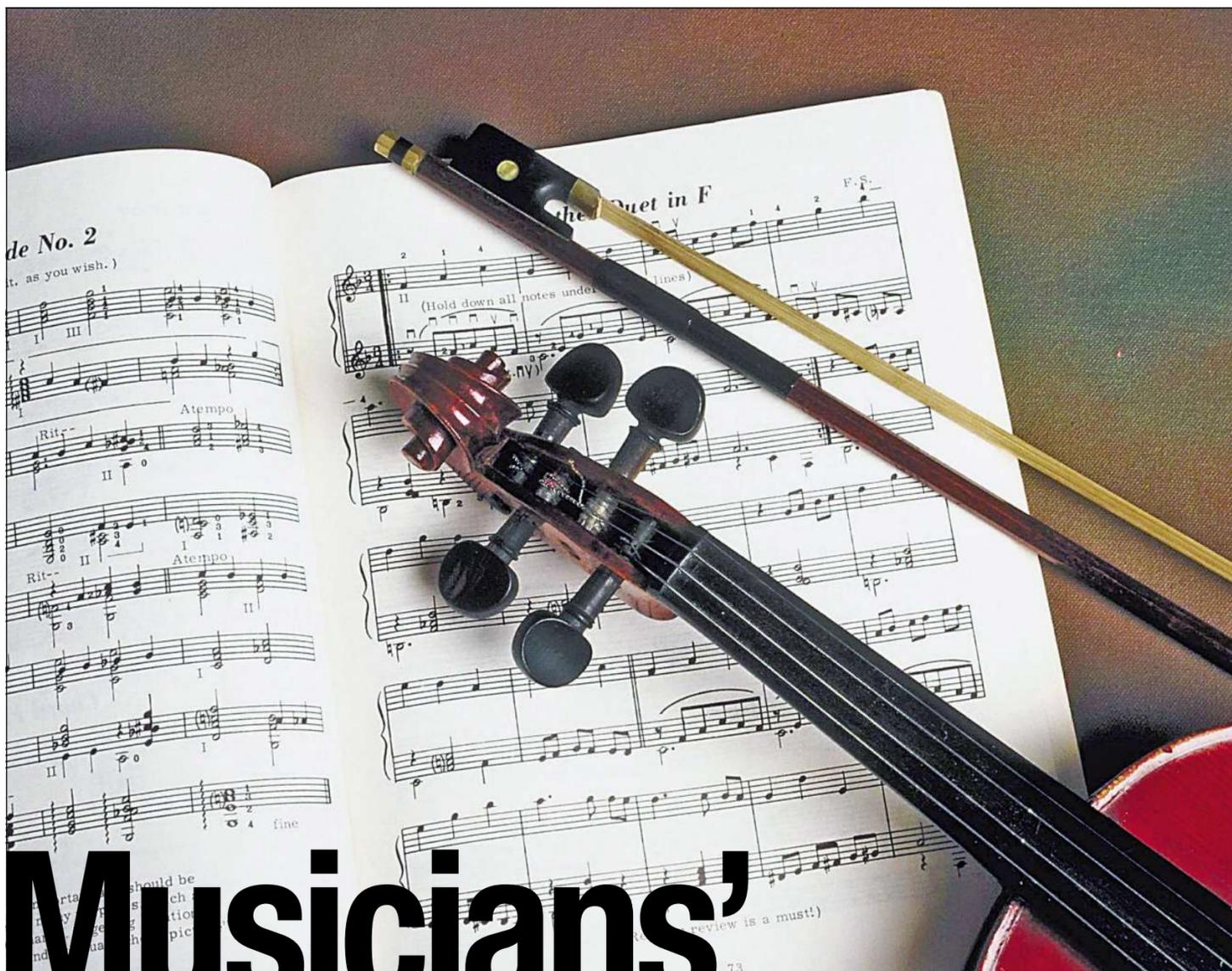
Fighting compulsion

Natural compound may combat impulse to pull out hair — Dr. Massey, Page 4

Body basics

Many health sources say hot flashes during menopause happen for six months to two years, but a 13-year study of 438 women showed hot flashes persist for more than five years on average.

Source: The Journal Menopause



Musicians' low note

For some, fear of injury greater than stage fright

BY EDWARD ORTIZ
Sacramento Bee

Fora musician, there is a terror greater than stage fright: a music injury.

As with athletes, musicians' bodies are pushed to the limit through hours of practice and intense bursts during performances. And often, the result is the onset of a repetitive stress injury or similar ailment.

But you won't find many musicians admitting that they have tendonitis or carpal tunnel syndrome. There's just too much competition for too few gigs, and a music injury is like a dark stain on a musician's bright career.

As a result, the incidence of music injuries has yet to be adequately

established. A recent joint study by the Texas Center of Music and Medicine at the University of North Texas and the Performing Arts Medical Association concluded that nearly 65 percent of the music-student population in the United States has dealt with some kind of repetitive stress or motion injury.

"These are hidden, tip-of-the-iceberg type numbers," said Dr. Robert Markison, a hand surgeon and clinical professor of surgery at the University of California, San Francisco. He is the co-founder of the health program for performing artists at the school.

Markison, who is also a longtime brass player, has, at any one time, 10 to 15 patients with music-related injuries in his San Francisco practice.

He considers himself



Repetition of fingerings can cause carpal tunnel syndrome over time.



Repetitive hand and wrist motions of playing the piano can cause pain on the inside of the wrist and forearm.

Inside:

- How to avoid getting hurt
- Common injuries among musicians

injuries during a 2007 address to the incoming class of medical students at Stanford University.

The majority of his music-injury patients are classical musicians.

"It's because they have to reproduce such a large volume of near-perfect musical material," he said.

Markison's patients range from a 7-year-old

See **MUSICIANS** on **PAGE 2**

Fibroid removal could prevent unnecessary hysterectomies

BY ROBERT MCCOPPIN
Health & Fitness Reporter
rmccoppin@dailyherald.com

When Sherry Nicklaus was diagnosed with uterine fibroids, her doctor had one recommendation: remove her uterus.

Nicklaus recoiled at the idea of having major surgery to cut out an organ of her body. Her doctor didn't discuss alternatives, but tried to tempt her by saying, "I'll make you go down two dress sizes."

Nicklaus was livid. As a former pharmaceutical saleswoman, she knew doctors are required to tell patients about all reasonable alternatives for treatment.

"I remember leaving terrified and upset," she said. "I knew the fibroids weren't life-threatening, they were benign, but they're annoying."

Eventually, Nicklaus, 46, of Geneva, found Dr. Jonathan Song at Delnor Hospital in St. Charles. He offered her a less invasive option: laparoscopic myomectomy. He uses two or three half-inch incisions to insert surgical instruments and a tiny camera to cut out just the fibroids or myomas.

Like most of Song's patients, Nicklaus was out of the hospital that day, and back to normal in two days — much faster than a hysterectomy, which typically takes several days in the hospital and a month or two of recovery.

At some point in their lives, 70 percent to 80 percent of women will have

"I think we're doing too many unnecessary hysterectomies because not enough doctors can do other procedures."

Dr. Jonathan Song

fibroids, though only some of them will ever have symptoms like excessive menstrual bleeding and pelvic pain or pressure.

Each year, about 600,000 women in the United States have hysterectomies, which can deplete the body's hormones and cause depression and other side effects.

One-third to a half of hysterectomies are for fibroids, according to the National Uterine Fibroids Foundation.

Song believes minimally invasive fibroid removal could prevent unnecessary hysterectomies for fibroids. He uses an innovative technique, which cuts the fibroids into smaller pieces so

they can be removed. After some initial resistance, the procedure is gaining wider acceptance among doctors.

This year, the American College of Obstetrics & Gynecology awarded first prize to Song and Drs. Carlos Rotman and Edgardo Yordan of the Oak Brook Institute of Endoscopy for their medical video of their procedure.

The patient in the video was able to recover to have a child and got pregnant again this year.

Some doctors reserve fibroid removal as a way to save the uterus for women who want to have children, or for those with only a single small fibroid.

But Song believes all women, even those after menopause and those with numerous large fibroids, should have the option of avoiding hysterectomy.

See **FIBROID** on **PAGE 4**

Natural compound may help compulsive hair-pulling disorder

Imagine being unable to resist an impulse to pull your hair out and there is no good medical therapy to help you fight the urge. That is what it feels like to have trichotillomania. Trichotillomania is relatively uncommon in the general population (about 1 percent). It happens more often in children and in girls more than boys. It is also more common in those with impulse control disorders like obsessive compulsive disorder (think TV's "Monk"). Unfortunately, medications do not really help and some actually make it worse.



Patrick B. Massey, M.D.
Alternative approach

reduced the symptoms of trichotillomania.

N-acetyl cysteine is a derivative of the amino acid, cysteine. It is important in a number of critical biochemical pathways

mania may be found in a compound made by the body, N-acetyl cysteine. A recent clinical trial demonstrated that regular consumption of N-acetyl cysteine significantly

in the body especially detoxification. In the brain, however, N-acetyl cysteine plays an important role in maintaining glutamate levels inside and outside of the nerve cells. Glutamate is an amino acid that seems to modulate compulsive behavior. N-acetyl cysteine has been shown to be beneficial in some compulsive behaviors like the impulse to use cocaine and even gambling addiction. It was hypothesized that it might be effective for reducing the hair-pulling compulsion that characterizes trichotillomania.

The effect of N-acetyl cysteine on trichotillomania

was revealed in a recent clinical trial published in the medical journal, Archives of General Psychiatry (2009). In this study, 50 participants were given either N-acetyl cysteine (1200 mg. to 2400 mg. per day) or a placebo. At the end of the 12-week study, 56 percent of patients taking N-acetyl cysteine had significant improvements in symptoms compared to only 16 percent of patients taking a placebo. Significant improvements were seen after only nine weeks of N-acetyl cysteine. In addition, it seemed that N-acetyl cysteine, at the doses used, did not have any significant

side effects.

Compulsive disorders are frustrating and potentially embarrassing. Traditional medications can be effective, but the side effects can be considerable. In addition, there is little research in this area for new and effective medications. Therefore, evaluating the benefits of a dietary supplement like N-acetyl cysteine is timely and relevant.

It has been theorized that many psychiatric disorders are the result of imbalances in brain neurotransmitters. This may be true since many psychiatric medications affect neurotransmitter levels in the

brain. This recent medical study (and others) have suggested that brain neurotransmitter levels can also be regulated by a compound as simple as N-acetyl cysteine. This is important because N-acetyl cysteine is less expensive and has fewer side effects than trichotillomania medications. It seems that the more we research, the more we find effective, natural solutions to medical conditions.

• Patrick B. Massey, M.D., Ph.D is medical director for complementary and alternative medicine for the Alexian Brothers Hospital Network.

Fibroid: Removal gets easier

Continued from Page 1

Dr. William Parker, a UCLA professor and author of "A Gynecologist's Second Opinion," has written that laparoscopic surgery has "revolutionized" gynecologic surgery by speeding up recovery time and shortening hospital stays.

Because laparoscopic myomectomy is a technically difficult procedure, Parker recommends asking surgeons how they were trained in it, how many such operations they've performed with a situation like your own and what complications they ran into.

"I think we're doing too many unnecessary hysterectomies," Song said, "because not enough doctors can do other procedures."

There are no randomized studies to be sure which treatments have the best long-range outcomes, but fibroid removal is gaining in popularity.

Dr. Howard Sharp at the University of Utah says more doctors are becoming proficient at stitching up the uterus

after such procedures, and the advance of robotic surgery is helping to make that easier.

Dr. Charles Miller, in Arlington Heights and Naperville, is one of the leading practitioners, he added.

"I still don't think every doctor is going to do it," he said, "but there may be a time when laparoscopic myomectomy is more mainstream."

At Central DuPage Hospital in Winfield, Dr. Victor Trinkus performs hysterectomies, and works with other doctors to provide alternative treatments.

One alternative is embolization, in which an interventional radiologist inserts a catheter to plug up blood vessels feeding the fibroids, causing them to shrink.

Trinkus hopes to reach women who avoid treatment altogether because they're afraid hysterectomy is the only option.

"Patients need to hear there are other options," he said. If symptoms are manageable, he added, surgery may not be necessary at all.

Childhood cancer survivors face recurrence

By NICOLE OSTROW
Bloomberg News

People who survived childhood brain cancer were 13 times more likely to die within 30 years than others their age, a study found.

The most common cause of death was recurrence of their brain cancer, according to research in the July 1 issue of the Journal of the National Cancer Institute. Others developed new malignancies, and more than 80 percent developed chronic medical conditions including hearing loss, endocrine problems, impaired vision or difficulty with emotions.

Tumors of the central nervous system, which are mostly found in the brain, are the second most common type of childhood cancer after leukemia, said the lead author of the study, Gregory Armstrong of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tenn. While medical treatment enables 74 percent of the children to survive at least five years, doctors have been concerned about the impact of their diagnosis and

treatment on long-term health.

Most previous studies of long-term health in survivors of childhood brain cancer have been much smaller and followed them for 10 years or less.

The researchers included 2,821 people in the study who were diagnosed and treated from 1970 to 1986 and had already survived five or more years after their cancer was

found. The median age of the children at diagnosis was 7.5 years for those who completed a baseline questionnaire, and five-year survivors were followed over 30 years.



First Gynecologic Surgeon in the Tri-Cities performs a series of Robot-Assisted Surgeries!

Jonathan Y. Song, MD, FACOG, FACS
Award Winning Surgeon, Board Certified in Gynecology, Certified in Advanced Laparoscopic Surgery and the da Vinci Robotic Surgical System

Say no to traditional open surgeries requiring 6-8 weeks of recovery and enjoy going home in 1 day with only a 2 week recovery with cosmetically pleasing tiny scars!

(630) 513-9160
www.tlcmmedicalgroup.us

St. Charles

Naperville



Super care for super kids

Get the best. At NCH in Arlington Heights, Children's Memorial specialists are here for you – in our Pediatrics Emergency Department, outpatient offices, and in the hospital 24/7. Now that's super!

www.nch.org/superkids

Here for you™

800 W. Central Road,
Arlington Heights, IL 60005
847.618.4YOU (4968)

Children's Memorial Hospital

nch Northwest Community Hospital