

Latest Lifesaving Drug

Ease Eczema Sans Steroids

A new FDA-approved nonsteroidal ointment improved the red, itchy skin in two-thirds of eczema patients. Since Protopic (tacrolimus) is steroid free, it reduces risk of side effects.

Hope for Cervical Cancer

A vaccine being developed could drastically reduce cervical cancer by preventing the two strains of human papillomavirus (HPV 16 and 18) that are most associated with the disease, says Daron Ferris, M.D., at Medical College of Georgia in Augusta. HPV is the fastest-growing sexually transmitted disease in the country and the leading risk factor for cervical cancer.

Caffeine and Parkinson's

Coffee drinkers are less likely to suffer from Parkinson's disease, which kills nerve cells that make the brain chemical dopamine, leading to slow, stiff movements. Some scientists hypothesize that caffeine may protect cells from this effect, says Michael Schwarzschild, M.D., Ph.D., at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.



Could caffeine lower Parkinson's risk?

The FDA has approved the drug Altace (ramipril) for use in preventing stroke, heart attack, and death from cardiovascular disease—the leading cause of mortality in the United States. Used for 10 years to treat high blood pressure, the drug has now been shown to have additional benefits, according to the Heart Outcomes Prevention Evaluation study. Researchers evaluated 9,297 patients 55 and older with a history of stroke or heart disease, or with diabetes and one other

cardiovascular risk factor. Those taking 10 mg of Altace reduced their risk of stroke by 32 percent, heart attack by 20 percent and cardiovascular death by 26 percent. "The results indicate that people can do more to lower cardiovascular disease risk—even people being treated well with other medications—by adding Altace to their regimen," says Philip de Vane, M.D., vice president of



Blood pressure drug offers new hope.

medical affairs for Wyeth-Ayerst, which co-markets the drug. "It offers new hope."



Eat Eggs for Good Health

Eggs are not the unhealthy foods they were once thought to be. Not only are they an inexpensive source of high-quality protein, nutrients found in eggs may improve memory retention in developing fetuses and vision health in adults, according to research published in the *Journal of the American College of Nutrition*. In animal studies, the nutrient choline (found in eggs), taken during the last trimester of pregnancy, aided fetal brain development, perhaps improving memory capability later in life, according to Steven Zeisel, M.D., Ph.D., chairperson of

the department of nutrition at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. Also, the antioxidants lutein and zeaxanthin (also present in eggs), which can reduce the risk of cataracts by up to 20 percent and age-related macular degeneration by up to 40 percent, are better absorbed by the body from eggs than from any other foods, says Jeffrey Blumberg, Ph.D., professor of nutrition at Tufts University in Boston. (The American Heart Association advises eating no more than 300 mg of cholesterol per day—the amount in one egg.)

Q I heard that eating fish while pregnant could harm my unborn baby. Is this true?

A The FDA announced recently that pregnant women should not eat certain kinds of fish that may contain high levels of mercury, which accumulates in streams and oceans, and can be toxic in high amounts to an unborn baby's nervous system. Do steer clear of large fish such as shark, swordfish, king mackerel and tilefish, which contain the highest levels of mercury. But don't avoid all fish. Seafood is low in fat and offers protein, nutrients and omega-3 fatty acids, which play key roles in a developing baby. The FDA states that pregnant women can safely eat shellfish, small ocean fish and farm-raised fish such as salmon, but suggests they limit intake to 12 ounces each week.

New Fat Fighter?

It may be possible for dieters to keep off fat and increase muscle. How? By taking a supplement containing conjugated linoleic acid (CLA), found in dairy and beef. According to Michael Pariza, Ph.D., director of the Food Research Institute at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, when dieters took about three grams of CLA daily, they were less likely to gain fat and more likely to gain muscle. CLA works by blocking fat cells from expanding, according to Dr. Pariza. He cautions, however, that CLA is not a miracle pill that will cause you to lose fat, but once you've lost weight, CLA may help maintain it. Additionally, the side effects of dieting (such as stomach problems and depression) were less severe in those taking CLA. But Dr. Pariza warns the buyer to beware since CLA supplements are not regulated by the FDA. He recommends that you look for a product that lists Tonalin (a high-quality CLA) among its ingredients.



It may be possible to stop fat cells from expanding.

Rachel Rabkin is the associate health and nutrition editor at FAMILY CIRCLE.

Photos (clockwise from top): Ed Wheeler/The Stock Market; Custom Medical Stock; Graphistock; Peter Zeray/Photonica.