

'Magic mushrooms' help smokers quit, and other studies you missed

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(CNN) -- Here's a roundup of five medical studies published this week that might give you new insights into your health. Remember, correlation is

The hallucinogenic chemical found in "magic mushrooms" could help cigarette smokers quit.

not causation -- so if a study finds a connection between two things, it doesn't mean that one causes the other.

Even a few extra pounds can hurt your blood pressure

The extra five pounds you gained on vacation this summer can do more harm than you think.

Even a small amount of weight gain can cause your blood pressure to go up, according to new research that was presented at the [American Heart Association's](#) High Blood Pressure Research Scientific sessions.

High blood pressure can lead to a stroke and/or heart attack, among other problems.

The small eight-week study constantly monitored the blood pressure of 16 people who were considered to be at a normal weight.

Scientists fed the group an extra 400 to 1,200 calories a day in the form of a chocolate bar or a shake. They gained about 5% in weight over the study period and saw their blood pressure rise.

Their systolic blood pressure increased from 114 to 118 mm Hg. While 118 is still considered healthy, the fact that it went up even with a slight weight gain is a concern. The people who gained the weight around their middle saw the biggest increase in blood pressure.

'Magic mushrooms' help smokers kick the habit

New research published in the [Journal of Psychopharmacology](#) suggests anti-smoking drugs on the market today could use a little magic.

The term "[magic mushrooms](#)" is usually used to describe mushrooms from the genus *Psilocybe* that are known to cause differences in mood, perception and behavior. Cigarette smokers who were given a pill with the hallucinogenic chemical found these mushrooms had nearly twice as much success quitting smoking than those taking approved anti-smoking drugs.

The study followed 15 volunteers who were given two to three doses of the hallucinogenic. Of those 15, 12 quit smoking and still hadn't smoked after six months.

It's a small study, and there was no control group, so the scientists at Johns Hopkins will do some follow-up work that will include brain scans to try and see what is happening in these quitters' brains.

[To read more: Johns Hopkins](#)

The secret to a happy marriage

Turns out the phrase "happy wife, happy life" may be true. What makes the most difference for married couples' general happiness is if the female partner in the relationship is happy, a new study in the [Journal of Marriage and Family](#) suggests.

Researchers looked at the lives of 394 couples. At least one member of the couple had to be older than 60.

If the female partner described the marriage as high quality, then the male partner's life satisfaction went up, even if he reported being unhappy about the marriage itself.

The authors believe the imbalance may be related to how women typically provide "more emotional and practical support to husbands than vice versa," co-author Deborah Carr said. "So even unhappily married men may receive benefits from the marriage that enhance his overall well-being."

[To read more: University of Michigan](#)

A new way to stop aging

The cure to ending aging may be lurking in your cells.

That's what [researchers at UCLA](#) suspect after finding the key to activating a gene called AMPK.

When turned on in the lab, this gene boosts the mechanism in cells that helps keep them clean and gets rid of cellular garbage such as plaque. Protein plaque buildup is believed to play a role in diseases that often come along with aging such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

You won't be seeing this technology at your doctor's office any time soon, unfortunately. The scientists were only able to do this with fruit flies, not humans.

The good news is that activating the gene increased a fruit fly's life by almost 30%. Even better news: the fly stayed healthy long into old age.

Researchers also saw that when they activated the cell in one part of the fruit fly, such as the central nervous system or in the intestine, it slowed aging throughout the body, rather than just being confined to the one area.

[To read more: UCLA](#)

Can your blood type affect your memory?

A study published online Thursday in [Neurology](#), found that people with type AB blood were 82% more likely to develop memory problems. Type AB is found in only about 4% of the population.

The study followed 30,000 healthy people over three years. Investigators looked at blood type and measured a blood protein known as factor VIII. This compound helps blood to clot.

They found the higher the amount of factor VIII in the blood, the more likely the patient would develop memory problems. Researchers also noted those with AB blood had a higher average level of factor VIII than people with other blood types, so the two may go hand in hand.

The study authors say more research is needed to better understand the connection.

Experts say this study shows it's important for people to know what their blood type is and how it can affect their health. Previous studies have found that certain blood types are also related to other vascular conditions like stroke.

To read more: [AAN](#)



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