

BOTTOM LINE HEALTH
25
YEARS

Expert Advice You Can Trust

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**Bedbug
self-defense**
See page 9

LATE-BREAKING NEWS

Cold weather and heart attack. Researchers analyzed 84,010 hospital admissions for heart attacks over four years. *Result:* For every half-degree drop in temperature, relative risk for heart attack increased by 2%. Adults ages 75 to 84 were especially vulnerable. *Theory:* Cold temperatures may increase blood pressure, blood thickness and the heart's workload. *Self-defense:* In winter, bundle up when going outdoors and closely monitor other heart attack risk factors, including stress and body weight.

Krishnan Bhaskaran, PhD, lecturer, statistical epidemiology, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, University of London, UK.

Magnesium may fight diabetes. When researchers studied 4,497 healthy adults' diets for 20 years, those who consumed the most magnesium (about 200 mg per 1,000 calories) were 47% less likely to develop diabetes than those who consumed the least (about 100 mg per 1,000 calories). *Theory:* Magnesium enhances enzymes that help the body process blood sugar. *Self-defense:* Eat magnesium-rich foods, such as almonds (one-quarter cup roasted, 97 mg) and spinach (one-half cup cooked, 77 mg).

Ka He, MD, associate professor, departments of nutrition and epidemiology, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill.

Brain stimulation for Alzheimer's. *New study:* Ten Alzheimer's patients received a placebo or repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS), which applies magnetic pulses to the brain at high frequencies. *Result:* The rTMS group improved sentence-comprehension test scores by 11%, while the placebo group showed no change. Benefits lasted for up to eight weeks. *If a loved one has Alzheimer's:* Ask the patient's doctor about rTMS—it is available at several US hospitals and research centers.

Maria Cotelli, PhD, researcher, Centro San Giovanni di Dio Fatebenefratelli, Brescia, Italy.

BottomLine health

WELLNESS STRATEGIES FROM THE WORLD'S LEADING MEDICAL EXPERTS

What Doctors Know Now That They Wish They Knew Then...

DENNIS GOTTFRIED, MD
University of Connecticut
School of Medicine



➤ 25 YEARS OF SCIENTIFIC ADVANCES

What if your doctor had advised you for years to follow a certain treatment or lifestyle practice but later told you that the advice had been found to be harmful or outdated? That's exactly what has happened numerous times over the past several years.

Science is always changing. But our goal at *Bottom Line/Health* is to report on the latest medical developments so that our readers have clear and authoritative guidance on their health issues.

As *Bottom Line/Health* celebrates its 25th anniversary, we spoke with Dennis Gottfried, MD, a leading expert on medical research, to identify some of the most significant and interesting medical advances that have occurred during the past quarter century.

Some represent frightening realizations. For example, millions of women had been treated for decades with hormone replacement therapy (HRT) for hot flashes and other menopausal symptoms. Then, in 2002, a Women's Health Initiative study showed that HRT increased

a woman's risk for life-threatening conditions such as heart attack, stroke and breast cancer.

But there were other developments that received far less fanfare. *For example...*

CATARACT FIX IN ONE DAY

By age 80, more than half of all Americans either have a cataract or have had cataract surgery.

By the late 1960s, surgeons had developed techniques to remove the damaged lens of the eye. But patients who had cataracts removed could see only if they wore thick, Coke bottle-style glasses. They also had to stay in the hospital—and lie almost completely still—for five or six days. In 1981, the FDA approved the first implantable lens so that thick glasses were no longer needed after surgery.

Now: Cataract surgery is one of

Bottom Line/Health interviewed Dennis Gottfried, MD, an assistant clinical professor of medicine at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine, Farmington, and an internist with a private practice in Torrington, Connecticut, www.DrDennisGottfried.com. He is the author of *Too Much Medicine: A Doctor's Prescription for Better and More Affordable Health Care* (Paragon House).



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inside

3 Dangers of "dirty" drugs

5 You can enjoy that juicy steak

7 ADHD and your eyes

8 Starbuck: Spleen health

9 Bedbug self-defense

10 Inlander: Men's checkup

11 Truth about thyroid cancer

13 Easy balance exercises

15 Mystery illness solved

ask the experts

BABY BOOMER DEMENTIA

My 53-year-old neighbor was just diagnosed with frontotemporal disease. What is that?

Frontotemporal disease (FTD) affects portions of the brain that are responsible for personality, decision-making and language. Unlike Alzheimer's disease, which destroys memory, FTD tends to change only behavior. FTD strikes up to one million Americans in the prime of life, between ages 40 and 65.

Early symptoms, including mood swings and out-of-character behaviors, are often misdiagnosed as signs of stress, fatigue or even menopause. Later, more severe symptoms include angry outbursts, aggression and obsessiveness. Family history is present in about 40% of FTD cases, suggesting a genetic link. There's no treatment for FTD. But doctors can ease symptoms with drugs, such as antidepressants, and teach patients and families to minimize the effects of FTD symptoms.

Raymond Faber, MD, director, Neuropsychiatry Clinic, Audie Murphy Veterans Memorial Hospital, San Antonio.

BAD BREATH SOLUTIONS

I have chronic bad breath. Any advice?

In addition to brushing your teeth at least twice daily, also brush your tongue and floss at least twice daily, in the morning and before bed. Use a tongue cleaner (also called a tongue brush or scraper), available at drugstores, to remove food debris trapped on the back of the tongue near the tonsils. Ask your dentist about prescription mouthwashes containing zinc chloride and sodium chlorite or chlorine dioxide. Some blue-colored generic mouthwashes also contain zinc chloride.

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Good brands: SmartMouth and ProFresh. If bad breath persists, ask your dentist to check for gum disease, sinus infection, chronic nasal drip or mouth breathing (which dries the oral cavity, making oral smells airborne). Rarely, bad breath can signal acid reflux or a more serious condition such as diabetes or chronic lung infection.

Andrew Spielman, DMD, PhD, associate dean, academic affairs, and professor, basic science and craniofacial biology, NYU College of Dentistry.

EYE TWITCH RELIEF

My eyelid has been twitching for days. What's causing this, and what can I do?

These involuntary eyelid spasms are most often caused by excessive fatigue, caffeine, alcohol or stress. Typically, they are painless, occurring every few seconds for several minutes, and can be accompanied by blurry vision and light sensitivity. Eye twitches (blepharospasm) can occur intermittently for several days to months. Twitching usually stops on its own.

To help eliminate eye twitches: Get at least eight hours of sleep nightly...limit alcohol and caffeine...lubricate eyes with artificial tear drops (such as Refresh and TheraTears) every four hours. See your eye doctor if twitching persists for more than one week, your upper eyelid droops, the eyelid completely closes with the twitch or tics start occurring in other parts of the face. In rare cases, twitching may be a side effect from medications, such as *chlorpromazine* (Thorazine) and *prochlorperazine* (Compazine), or

may indicate a brain or nerve disorder, such as Bell's palsy (in which facial muscles become temporarily paralyzed) or Tourette's syndrome (marked by unusual movements called tics).

James Salz, MD, clinical professor of ophthalmology, University of Southern California, Los Angeles.

FLEXIBLE VEGETARIAN DIET

What can you tell me about the buzzword flexitarian?

The word *flexitarian* combines the words flexible and vegetarian. It's a way of eating that is less restrictive than a completely plant-based diet yet still provides many of its health benefits, such as weight loss and reduced risk for heart attack, diabetes and cancer. A flexitarian eats a diet rich in whole grains, fruits, vegetables, beans, nuts and healthy fats while limiting meat intake—but not excluding it entirely. Add fish based on personal preference. You probably already have a few vegetarian meals each week—from peanut butter sandwiches to vegetable burritos. For flexitarians, vegetarian meals outnumber meaty meals.

To adopt a flexitarian diet: Adjust the foods on your plate at mealtime so that 25% is lean meat or beans, 25% is whole grains and 50% is fruits and veggies. You can also swap beans for meat in recipes (use one-quarter cup of beans per ounce of meat).

Dawn Jackson Blatner, RD, Chicago-based nutritionist in private practice and author of *The Flexitarian Diet* (McGraw-Hill). www.DawnJacksonBlatner.com

Have a health-related question? Send it to BottomLineHealth@Boardroom.com, Box 10702, Stamford, Connecticut 06904-0702...or send it via e-mail to BLHealth@Boardroom.com.

To eat is a necessity, but to eat intelligently is an art.
— François de La Rochefoucauld, French author (1613–1680)