Did you know that...

...hot weather hurts the stock market? When it is very hot, stocks perform worse than average. Conversely, very cold temperatures seem to stimulate aggressiveness and risk-taking behavior, leading to higher market returns.

Melanie Cao, PhD, and Jason Wei, PhD, professors of finance, Schulich School of Business, York University, Toronto, Canada, and University of Toronto, and leaders of a study of 27 major stock exchanges around the world over a 20-year period. The study was published in Journal of Banking and Finance.

...patients treated for melanoma have an 11% risk of recurrence within the first year? People who suffer a second occurrence have a 31% chance of developing a third tumor in the first five years. Self-defense: Have frequent skin screenings by a dermatologist, and perform routine self-examinations.

Cristina R. Ferrone, MD, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, New York City, surgical oncology fellow, Melanoma Disease Management Team, and leader of a study of 4,484 melanoma patients. Published in Journal of the American Medical Association.

...Medicare will not pay for Viagra and other erectile-dysfunction drugs starting January 1, 2007? The subsidy was ended as part of legislation that extended medical help for the poor and provided unemployment benefits to states hit by hurricanes.

Deane Beebe, communications director, Medicare Rights Center, New York City.

...middle-class people donate a much greater percentage of their assets to charity than wealthy people? Recent finding: On average, US households with annual adjusted gross incomes of $50,000 to $100,000 donate gifts equal to more than 2.5% of their investment assets—six times more than their wealthier peers.

Tim D. Stone, president and executive director, New Tithing Group, a philanthropic company that has been campaigning for greater giving from the country's wealthy citizens, San Francisco. www.newtithing.org

...the new mileage deduction for 2006 is 44.5 cents per mile? That is four cents a mile less than the temporary rate set for the last quarter of 2005, even though gas prices have risen since then.


DYE-BYE LAXATIVES

Natural Remedies For Constipation

Mark A. Stengler, ND
La Jolla Whole Health Clinic

Constitution is one of the most common digestive complaints, accounting for about 2.5 million doctor visits every year. But it occurs much more frequently than this number indicates because the majority of people with constipation treat it at home with over-the-counter laxatives.

Big mistake: Regular use of certain laxatives can make constipation worse by damaging the large intestine, making it "lazier" and even less efficient.

Most patients who experience constipation can prevent it permanently with dietary changes and other natural approaches. Even patients who have had constipation for years often can restore normal bowel function within two weeks.

WHAT'S NORMAL?

In a healthy body, waste travels through the digestive tract in a predictable, regular cycle, over a period of six to 24 hours. Most people have one to three bowel movements daily. Others have as few as three bowel movements a week. There's a lot of individual variability — what's normal for you might not be normal for someone else.

Red flag: Any change in your normal bowel habits. See a doctor if the frequency of bowel movements changes...you have blood in your stool...or you are experiencing intense abdominal pain. Constipation by itself is rarely dangerous, but it may be a sign of other problems, including colon cancer.

Stool in the intestine contains bacteria, fungi, and metabolic by-products of digestion. If it remains in the colon for too long, these harmful substances cause a number of uncomfortable symptoms, such as bloating, painfully hard stools and a general sense of fatigue.

SUPPLEMENTS & FOODS

The right diet and supplements can relieve constipation. Best choices...

High-fiber foods, including brown rice, whole-wheat bread, oatmeal, fruits, vegetables and legumes, such as beans and lentils. Fiber absorbs water in the intestine, which makes the stool bulkier. This triggers the intestinal contractions that cause bowel movements. Fiber also makes the stool softer, so it is easier to pass.

If you don't eat a lot of plant foods, you can supplement with an over-the-counter product containing psyllium (such as Metamucil), following the directions on the label. Or take one teaspoon of ground psyllium seed husks twice daily. Psyllium acts as a bulking agent and increases the frequency— and comfort—of bowel movements. Be sure to drink plenty of water or juice to avoid making constipation worse.

Ground flaxseed also works. It's a highly concentrated source of fiber, with the added benefit of supplying healthful omega-3 fatty acids. Have one to two tablespoons of ground flaxseed daily. You can sprinkle it on yogurt or...
cereal or just eat it plain. Be sure to drink at least 10 ounces of water with it. Don’t eat whole flaxseed. It has a tough outer coating that is not broken down during digestion.

Some people take stool softeners. Common ones, such as docusate (Colace), are not laxatives and not habit forming, but you can get similar results with flaxseed oil. Take one to two tablespoons daily. The oil can go in a shake or on a salad.

**Magnesium.** People with constipation often are deficient in this mineral. Magnesium helps in three ways—it increases the strength and regularity of the intestine’s muscular contractions...it relaxes the nervous system...and at higher doses, it promotes the accumulation of water in the intestine, which boosts bowel function.

**Foods high in magnesium:** Green, leafy vegetables (such as spinach), brown rice, avocado, berries, cabbage, broccoli and bananas.

If you have acute constipation, take 250 mg of magnesium two to four times daily. Don’t take supplemental magnesium for more than about a week. It can lead to dependence—reducing the colon’s natural ability to contract—and can interfere with the normal absorption of nutrients. Don’t take supplemental magnesium if you are pregnant unless authorized by your doctor.

**Fermented foods.** People who eat sauerkraut, live-culture yogurt and/or kefir (a fermented milk) are less likely to experience constipation because fermented foods contain probiotics. These beneficial organisms crowd out harmful microbes that may impair digestion and elimination.

Eat fermented foods daily, or take a probiotic supplement. Look for a product that provides at least four billion active organisms, preferably a combination of *Lactobacillus acidophilus* and *Bifidus bacteria*.

**Milk thistle (Silybum marianum).** A traditional remedy for hepatitis, milk thistle improves the flow of bile, a digestive juice that breaks down fats in the intestinal tract. Bile improves the colon’s motility (the ability of the colon to contract and eliminate wastes). *Dose:* 200 mg to 250 mg of a product standardized to 80% *silymarin* (the active ingredient) with meals twice daily for six to eight weeks. Don’t take it if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

**HOMEOPATHY**

In homeopathy, individuals are given very small amounts of substances that would produce the same or similar symptoms of an illness in a healthy person if given in larger doses. These remedies stimulate the body’s defenses to prevent or treat an illness.

It can be a challenge to find the right homeopathic remedy for constipation—but when it works, the results can be impressive. It’s safe to self-medicate with homeopathy, but people tend to have better results when they work with a trained practitioner who can match specific remedies with symptoms. **Remedies to try...**

**Alumina** is recommended for patients who typically go several days without having a bowel movement.

**Calcarea Carbonica** is for patients with chronic constipation who often feel cold, have clammy hands and/or feet and experience a lot of stress.

**Lycopodium** is helpful for patients who experience gas and bloating along with constipation.

For each remedy, take two pellets of 30C potency twice daily for two weeks (or follow directions on the label).

**GIVE UP DAIRY**

A *New England Journal of Medicine* study of 65 children with chronic constipation reported that cow’s milk was the cause in two-thirds of cases. It contains the protein *casein*, which has been shown to cause constipation.

Also, reduce the amount of saturated fats in your diet. A diet high in saturated fat slows motility—and the longer the stool stays in the intestine, the more likely it is to harden and interfere with normal bowel movements.

**DAILY EXERCISE**

Mild-to-moderate aerobic exercise—a 30-minute brisk walk, for example—helps stimulate intestinal contractions. It also reduces stress and relaxes the nervous system, which improves muscle movements in the intestine and helps prevent or treat constipation.

**STRESS CONTROL**

Yoga, Pilates, meditation and other stress-reducing activities can reduce constipation. Studies show that people who experience high levels of stress often have reduced intestinal efficiency. In addition, people with high stress levels often have hectic lifestyles and don’t take the time for regular bowel movements. Every day, set aside time for mental and physical relaxation.

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**Sleep tight**

Dini M. Miller, PhD
Virginia Tech

**The Lowdown On Bedbugs**

Bedbugs—small nocturnal insects that feed on human and animal blood—are a growing problem in hotels in the US and abroad, as well as in apartment buildings, dormitories, sleep-away camps and other places. Unlike mosquitos, bedbugs don’t transmit disease—but their bites can cause irritation and discomfort. They do not attach themselves to people. They move from place to place via luggage, clothing and other items. To protect yourself...

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**When staying in hotels, motels and other facilities:** Pull back the bed sheets, and check the mattress seams and tufts. Look for live bugs that are about one-quarter to one-half-inch long and vary in color from reddish brown to nearly transparent. Also check for light brown, translucent molted skins...and pin-sized black spots (excrement). If possible, pull back the fabric headboard and inspect it too. If signs are present, ask for another room. Also: Keep your luggage in the bathroom until you have checked the bed.

**When you return home:** Leave luggage outsides until you have inspected each item.

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**At home:** If you find bedbugs on an article of clothing, comforters or other linens, wash them in 150° water. You may also want to call an exterminator. Do not bring used furniture or mattresses into your home.

Dini M. Miller, PhD, associate professor of entomology, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Virginia. Virginia Tech is one of only two US universities that raise bedbugs for research.

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On the web: www.BottomLineSecrets.com