

YEAR IN REVIEW 2007

Top 2007 health breakthroughs for women

By Curt Pesmen

Health

(Health.com) -- Let's face it. We live in a time when a "Your Friends Make You Fat" story gets headlined and blogged 24-7 (no matter that it was just one study in a doctors' journal), while the recent discovery of two (two!) genes linked to multiple sclerosis (MS) rates nary a peep.

That doesn't make us shallow (or even overweight), it just means we have to look a little harder for the latest medi-news that truly matters to women. And that's what we've done here: From acne advances to new ways to fight pain, these 19 breakthroughs will help you -- no matter how much your friends weigh -- live a longer, more healthful life.

1. Obesity: Fat blockers that work

You've heard about the dangers of abdominal fat and that stress might contribute to the formation of that spare tire. Now there's news that obesity caused by life stress may actually be controllable. Researchers at Georgetown University, under the guidance of Zofia Zukowska, Ph.D., professor and chairwoman of the school's department of physiology and biophysics, injected overfed lab mice with neuropeptide Y (NPY), which stimulated fat growth, and an NPY blocker, which reduced the pro-obesity effects of stress when combined with fat- and sugar-rich foods. The blocker worked. Now they're looking at how to turn off both new fat cells and new blood vessel formation to shrink fatty tissue and treat obesity. We wish they'd hurry up.

2. Acne: Vacuum away those zits

There's good news for the 25 percent of acne-afflicted folks who don't respond to traditional Rx acids or peels and microdermabrasion techniques. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recently cleared the new PPx (Photo-pneumatic) Pore-Cleansing System for treating stubborn acne. Originally, PPx was reviewed and OK'd as a hair-removal system. But in recent research at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, the treatment showed overwhelming success in reducing signs of acne breakouts. PPx is a two-step process. First, facial pores are gently vacuumed to remove excess oil that blocks pores, then a broadband light (laser) is used to dissolve away any remaining impurities in the skin. Between 70 and 85 percent of those tested responded well to PPx, says Dale Isaacson, M.D., dermatologist and assistant clinical professor at George Washington University. Caveats: As many as five or six \$300 sessions, plus follow-ups, may be required for best effects; and the technique may not work as well on darker skin tones.

3. Menstruation: No more periods, period

This spring the first, low-dose, take-every-day birth control pill went on the market in the United States. Although the reception was mixed, there's no doubt it's a medical breakthrough. Not only is Lybrel more than 98 percent effective (in line with other three-month or 21-days-on-7-days-off pills), but over time it effectively stops menstruation. That's welcome news for women with painful or debilitating periods, or those who compete in high-level athletics or are planning a wedding (though some women experience breakthrough bleeding). Could putting your period on hold be dangerous? Long-term testing hasn't been done, but most docs aren't worried. What we like best? The growing number of contraception choices.

4. Exercise: Work out -- a little

Don't have time for the recommended hour-a-day workout? That's OK. A good 10 sweaty minutes a day may be enough to help you live longer, says a study published this year in the Journal of the American Medical Association. The research, by Timothy Church, Ph.D., of Louisiana State University, and his colleagues started innocently enough: Sports scientists wanted to learn how many workouts per week it would take to possibly extend the life span of an average, unhealthy woman in her 50s. They got a surprise when, among obese and inactive female subjects studied, a mere 10 minutes of moderate workouts per day (including walking briskly or riding an exercise bike) led to a marked improvement in fitness and decrease in waist size -- and, thus, reduced risks of early death. If 10 sweaty minutes is good, 30 to 60 are still probably better. But on those days you can only "take 10," consider it far better than nothing.

To learn more about Isolaz Photopneumatic Acne Therapy, visit www.ISOLAZ.com or Call 877.275.4779

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