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An informative, provocative and essential newsletter:



The Health Reformer

Here is why alcohol-rehabilitation centers provide little benefit to those who are trying to reform

By the licensing of the liquor traffic, temptation is kept constantly before those who are trying to reform. Institutions have been established where the victims of intemperance may be helped to overcome their appetite. This is a noble work; but so long as the sale of liquor is sanctioned by law, the intemperate receive little benefit from inebriate asylums. They cannot remain there always. They must again take their place in society. The appetite for intoxicating drink, though subdued, is not wholly destroyed; and when temptation assails them, as it does on every hand, they too often fall an easy prey.

....The man who has formed the habit of using intoxicants is in a desperate situation. His brain is diseased, his will power is weakened. So far as any power in himself is concerned, his appetite is uncontrollable. He cannot be reasoned with or persuaded to deny himself. Drawn into the dens of vice, one who has resolved to quit drink is led to seize the glass again, and with the first taste of the intoxicant every good resolution is overpowered, every vestige of will destroyed. One taste of the maddening draft, and all thought of its results has vanished. The heartbroken wife is forgotten. The debauched father no longer cares that his children are hungry and naked. By legalizing the traffic, the law gives its sanction to this downfall of the soul and refuses to stop the trade that fills the world with evil.

Must this always continue? Will souls always have to struggle for victory, with the door of temptation wide open before them? Must the curse of intemperance forever rest like a blight upon the civilized world? Must it continue to sweep, every year, like a devouring fire over thousands of happy homes? When a ship is wrecked in sight of shore, people do not idly look on. They risk their lives in the effort to rescue men and women from a watery grave. How much greater the demand for effort in rescuing them from the drunkard's fate!

The Ministry of Healing, pp. 342-344

Atkins: A high-protein hazard

Those who do struggle with their weight often turn to high-protein diets such as Atkins or Protein Power in an effort to slim down, but they are misguided, the Nutrition Committee of the American Heart Association warns in a recent advisory.

Often these diets are high in fat and reduce the intake of nutrient-rich fruits and vegetables. As a

result, says Robert H. Eckel, MD, one of the authors of the advisory, "many of these diets fail to provide essential vitamins, minerals, fiber, and other nutritional elements." What's more, they don't deliver on their promises to provide long-term weight loss. Not only that, their frequent emphasis on animal sources of protein such as meat and eggs means dieters will be consuming large quantities of saturated fat and cholesterol.

Studies have consistently shown that successful maintenance of weight loss is most likely when people follow a nutritionally sound diet and increase physical activity to burn more calories than they consume, Dr. Eckel says.

Health Tips, Oct. 12, 2001

The price for working at night may be your health

ABOUT 20 percent of us toil outside the traditional 9-to-5 routine as more and more companies embrace the concept of working around the clock. And according to a new study, that's causing major health problems.

As more people work evening and overnight shifts at call centers, retailers and bank processing centers, they're suffering from higher rates of gastrointestinal troubles, cardiovascular diseases and sleep disorders than their counterparts who are home in time to watch the 6 p.m. news.

That's because they dine too often on vending machine fare, they don't exercise as much because they're tired, and they tend to drink too much caffeine to stay awake and then too much alcohol to fall asleep, according to the Circadian Technologies study *Health in Extended Hours Operations: Understanding the Challenges, Implementing the Solutions*.

....And the problems aren't just hurting employees. Circadian estimates that it costs an extra \$1,181 per extended-hour employee per year to pay for the increased medical expenses. Then there are costs for sick leave and lost productivity.

By L.M. Sixel (HoustonChronicle.com)

Blood alcohol concentration (BAC) laws encourage dangerous driving

Even though some people ascertain that BAC legislation helps to reduce alcohol-related crashes and fatalities, the findings of the following study prove them wrong.

Aug. 20, 2003 -- Indulging in as little as one cocktail or glass of wine at lunch could make driving dangerous -- even if the driver has blood alcohol levels within legal limits.

(Over, please)

A new study shows just a small amount of alcohol can worsen daytime drowsiness and increase the risk of an accident.

Researchers say most drivers who have a lunchtime drink may not even be aware that a single drink can affect their driving skills, and the dangers of daytime drinking and driving are even more pronounced in people who did not get a good night's sleep.

Researcher Jim Horne, of the Sleep Research Centre at Loughborough University, U.K., and colleagues say about one in 10 road accidents are caused by drowsy drivers, and that rate is even higher on long stretches of highway.

For the study, published in the current issue of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, researchers tested the driving alertness of 12 men between the ages of 20 and 26, which is an age group at high risk of automobile accidents.

The men had either a normal night's sleep or a night of disrupted sleep. Their driving skills were tested after they had a drink with lunch -- either an orange juice and vodka cocktail or alcohol-free drink. The participants didn't know whether or not they drank an alcoholic -- 2.5 ounces of alcohol -- or non-alcoholic drink. Each man was then asked to drive for two hours in a driving simulator.

Researchers looked at the amount of lane drift among the drivers, their perceived levels of sleepiness, and electrical brain activity measured by EEG (electroencephalography).

They found daytime drinking worsened the body's natural dip in mental alertness that occurs in the afternoon in non-sleepy drivers and even more so in sleepy drivers. In particular, alcohol significantly increased the amount of lane drift, which is a common cause of accidents involving drowsy drivers.

But the drivers themselves did not seem to notice the additional effect of alcohol on their sleepiness.

"The sleepy drivers seem to have not realized that alcohol had increased their sleepiness to an extent that was clearly reflected by greater driving impairment and in the EEG," write the researchers.

Researchers say those findings suggest that mixing even one drink with driving is dangerous and could lead to an accident, and sleepy drivers should avoid alcohol at all times, if not avoid driving altogether. SOURCE: Occupational and Environmental Medicine, v. 60: 689-692, 2003.

By Jennifer Warner, WebMD Medical News

Babies Get Early Start on Bad Eating Habits

Oct. 27, 2003 -- Even before they learn to walk, many American children are well on their way to developing bad eating habits that are startling similar to those that plague adults: too much fat, sugar, and salt, and too little fruits and vegetables.

A new study shows that infants and toddlers are already getting too many calories and eating inappropriate foods such as pizza, soda, and French fries before their second birthday.

In fact, the survey of more than 3,000 infants and toddlers from 4 to 24 months old found that French fries are the most commonly eaten vegetable for toddlers aged 15 to 24 months, and soda is being served to infants as young as 7 months old.

Researchers say a 1- to 2-year-old infant needs about 950 calories a day, but the survey found the average calorie intake of toddlers in this age group was 1,220. That's an average of 270 calories more than they need.

....(Researchers) found...potentially dangerous eating habits that could increase the risk of obesity and other health problems among toddlers and infants:

* Nearly 25% of 19- to 24-month-old babies are not eating a single fruit or vegetable in a day.

* Half of 7 to 8 month olds eat desserts or salty snacks or drink sweetened beverages.

* A quarter of toddlers 19 to 24 months old eat hot dogs, bacon, or sausage once a day, and more than one in 10 eat pizza on a daily basis.

The survey also showed that picky eating habits develop early, and nearly 50% of children were considered picky eaters by 24 months of age.

But parents and caregivers may be giving up to soon when it comes to

introducing new foods into baby's diet.

Researchers found that children were only offered a new food up to five times at most before the parent or caregiver decided that the child disliked it. But studies show eight to 15 exposures are needed to gain acceptance of new foods. *By Jennifer Warner, WebMD Medical News*

We're not serious about putting an end to drunken driving

...Who do we think we're kidding? We're not serious about putting an end to drunken driving.

Never have been.

Sure, everyone says drunk driving is bad.

But we aren't willing to do what we must to end it.

And a governor's task force -- even one that churns out a sobering 50-page report -- isn't going to terminate this scourge on society.

Neither will local magistrates, prosecutors and judges who've jumped on the anti-DUI band wagon after the gruesome death toll claimed a 16-year-old Norfolk boy, an Eastern Shore state trooper and his 8-year-old son, and a Virginia Beach dad who died in front of his two young children.

Nope, as long as the commonwealth sticks with its present law, we aren't serious.

Because the blood-alcohol standard is a joke.

Think about it for a minute.

As it stands, Virginia allows someone with a blood-alcohol level lower than 0.08 to drive a car, but anyone hitting or exceeding that magic number is considered a criminal.

How does a drinker decide if he ought to drive?

He could be drunk, for crying out loud.

The fatal -- and I mean fatal -- flaw in this law is that the person least able to judge whether he's had too much to drink is one who's had too much to drink.

...And as long as we stick with it, the carnage will continue. Count on it.

We in the newspaper business will continue to write moving front-page stories about kids being killed, and you out there will continue to attend their funerals. We'll all wring our hands and wipe our eyes, and bury more and more of our sons and daughters and mothers and fathers until our cemeteries are full.

But let's not puff up our chests and pretend to be serious.

Not until we ban drinking and driving.

That's the only way to end this curse, but it's a suggestion so radical, so neo-Prohibitionist, that no one seems willing to give voice to it.

Well, I will.

I would support a law that simply says any level of alcohol in a driver's blood is too much.

...Virginia ought to boldly lead the nation by being the first to make it a crime to operate a motor vehicle after consuming alcohol. Any amount.

Mandatory jail time would have to accompany any conviction for drinking and driving. Along with that, automatic work release should be required, so offenders could pay their own room and board by being taken to their jobs each day and sleeping in their cells each night.

....The indisputable fact is that alcohol impairs judgment and slows reaction time. Its effects vary from person to person.

Drivers have no business drinking. At all.

Sure, we all say we'd like to end the death and devastation wrought by drunken drivers.

But until we ban drinking and driving, we aren't really serious about it.

By Kerry Dougherty

The Virginian-Pilot

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