

[HEALTH]

Sewer plants offer a snapshot showing drug use



Julie Deardorff
Tribune health and fitness reporter

A city's sewer plant doesn't just treat human waste; it also can tip off law enforcement officials about a local drug problem.

Using just a teaspoon of wastewater, Oregon State University researchers recently measured levels of everything from caffeine, cotinine (a break-down product of nicotine from cigarette smoke) and prescription drugs to methamphetamines, cocaine and Ecstasy.

The community urinalysis wouldn't flush out single users but could eventually help officials track the spread of drugs, the researchers said.

When drugs break down in the body, their by-products end up in excrement and urine. That waste flows from toilets to treatment plants.

Caffeine is the ingredient Americans consume and excrete the most. The scientists also found higher concentrations of "recreational" drugs such as cocaine on weekends. Levels of prescription drugs and meth were constant.

Light a match: Walgreens has pulled three of its air fresheners from shelves after tests by an environmental group showed that the products had high levels of hormone-disrupting chemicals known as phthalates, which can be dangerous to pregnant women or young children.

When will the government start assessing the risk of the popular sprays, gels and plug-ins?

That's the question several organizations asked in a petition to two federal agencies after the study by the Natural Resources Defense Council environmental group found that 12 of 14 common air fresheners contain phthalates.

The products have been linked to breathing difficulties, developmental problems in babies and cancer in laboratory animals, according to the petition from the NRDC, the Sierra Club, Alliance for Healthy Homes and the National Center for Healthy Housing.

Last year a National Institutes of Health study found that exposure to a chemical in many air fresheners, dichlorobenzene, may reduce lung function.

Walgreens removed its Walgreens Air Freshener Spray, Walgreens Scented Bouquet Air Fresheners and Walgreens Solid Air Fresheners as a precaution, after the NRDC tests showed they had the highest levels of phthalates. It plans to have them independently tested and will have a phthalate-free version available soon, a spokesman said. But products containing dichlorobenzene—most often used in room deodorizers, urinal and toilet-bowl blocks—are still available. Other brands that tested for high or medium levels of phthalates included Ozium Glycolized Air Sanitizer, Air Wick Scented Oil, Febreze NOTICEables Scented Oil, Glade Air Infusions, Glade PlugIn Scented Oil and Oust Air Sanitizer Spray, according to the NRDC.

"Air fresheners work either by masking the smell with a strong, synthetic odor or by desensitizing our sense of smell by coating the nasal passages with a film or blocking the olfactory nerve," Bridget Bodoana wrote in "The Little Book of Quick Fixes for Eco Conscious Cleaning" (Quadrille, \$12.95).

To reduce smells, Bodoana suggests opening a window or installing an extractor fan. In the kitchen, use a lighted candle while cooking; if fish is involved, place a small bowl of white vinegar next to the stove.

Crusader or con man? Best-selling author and infomercial star Kevin Trudeau wants you to trust him on health issues because he's not one of "them"—a conventionally trained doctor, government regulator or someone with ties to the pharmaceutical industry.

But Trudeau has a long history of deception. And now "them" are after him. The Federal Trade Commission is charging him with misrepresenting the contents of his latest book, "The Weight Loss Cure 'They' Don't Want You to Know About" (Alliance Publishing, \$14.95), which offers a lifetime cure for obesity.

"I can eat whatever I want now, anything and as much as I want any time I want," Trudeau has claimed in ads, according to the FTC. But his diet describes a "grueling plan that requires severe dieting, daily injections of a prescription drug that consumers cannot easily get and lifelong dietary restrictions," the FTC said.

Sounds like every other worthless diet book on the market. That makes Trudeau, who has served prison time for credit card fraud and larceny and paid hefty fines to the FTC for creating infomercials with false and misleading health claims, a perfect spokesman for the industry.

■ E-mail Julie Deardorff at jdeardorff@tribune.com. Send health and fitness news to rwerland@tribune.com.

IN THE WEB EDITION
Get an even healthier helping at Julie's Health Club blog, chicagotribune.com/julie



Photos for the Tribune by Warren Skalski

Dental assistant Patti Zuzak keeps an eye on a patient undergoing a BriteSmile treatment at the Center for Dental Excellence in Flossmoor.

Office procedures do lunch

It's amazing what you can have done in an hour

By Terri Yablonsky Stat
Special to the Tribune

It's amazing what you can accomplish in an hour. Today's trend in office-based medical procedures means, for example, that you can return from lunch sterilized, lips plumped a la Angelina Jolie, teeth whitened, even treated for a common foot ailment.

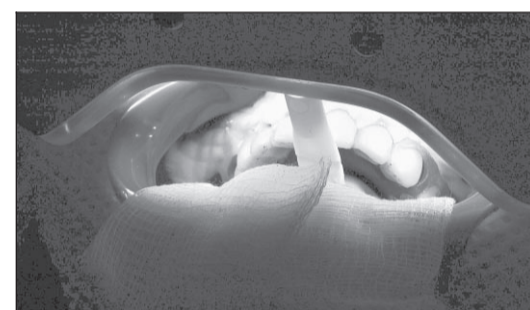
These in-and-out procedures have benefits, including minimal to no anesthesia, shorter recovery, convenience and cost. What's more, with such little time off, nobody knows you've had anything done.

Women now can be sterilized in the doctor's office without sedation. Essure is a technique, approved by the Food and Drug Administration, in which specially trained doctors insert spring-like coils, called micro-inserts, through the vagina and into the fallopian tubes. The coil has a small fiber that causes the fallopian tube to develop scar tissue, according to Dr. Gil Weiss, obstetrician/gynecologist with the Association for Women's Health Care in Chicago and Northbrook.

Once the scar tissue forms, sperm can no longer reach the egg.

The procedure takes just a few minutes. "We use a local block to numb the entrance to the cervix," Weiss said. Over-the-counter painkillers may be used before and after the procedure.

Although tubal ligation can be reversed, Essure is permanent. An X-ray three months later



Blue high-intensity light activates the hydrogen peroxide gel used on the teeth.

confirms the fallopian tubes are blocked. With tubal ligation, a woman may be out of commission for several days to a week due to the abdominal incision.

A common foot ailment can be treated over the lunch hour as well. A neuroma is a swollen nerve in the ball of the foot that can cause burning, cramping, numbness or pain while standing and walking.

Surgery requiring weeks of recovery traditionally has been used to remove the neuroma. A new treatment called neurolytic injections can reduce or eliminate the neuroma in many cases without surgery, according to Dr. Howard Stone, a podiatrist with the North Shore Podiatry Group in Glenview, Lake Forest and Gurnee.

The doctor injects a small amount of an alcohol/local anesthetic solution around the nerve to chemically dissolve the neuroma. Anywhere from three to nine injections are given at two-week intervals. "It's a wonderful, non-surgical treatment for a common foot problem," Stone said.

If you want to look better without going under the knife, consider injectable fillers. Dr. Daniel Tresley, an oculoplastic surgeon in Northbrook, uses fillers to instantly plump lips, smooth facial wrinkles and folds, and erase hollowness and dark circles under the eyes. These cosmetic flaws are due to a loss of volume.

Tresley uses injectable fillers such as Restylane or Juvéderm, which are made of hyaluronic acid, a naturally occurring substance in the skin. "They're very safe fillers, with no allergic reactions," he said.

After numbing the patient with a local anesthetic, Tresley injects the filler beneath the skin. The change is immediate and can last anywhere from 4 to 12 months, depending on the area. One syringe costs \$500 and is more than adequate for lips, he said.

Flash pearly whites in just an hour. BriteSmile whitens teeth 14 shades in 60 minutes.

Dr. Charles Greenebaum, a dentist at the Center for Dental Excellence in Flossmoor, has offered the BriteSmile procedure for seven years. "We like it because you've got effective whitening and very few side effects like sensitivity," Greenebaum said.

With BriteSmile, hydrogen peroxide gel is applied to the teeth and activated by blue high-intensity light. "You get significant whitening immediately," Greenebaum said. "Over-the-counter products haven't proven to be as effective."

How long the treatment lasts depends on what's consumed afterward, Greenebaum said. He recommends avoiding smoking and drinking coffee and red wine. Patients can touch up their color every month or two with custom-made trays. BriteSmile costs about \$500.

Back from the '60s, go-go dancing hits the gym floor

By Emilie Le Beau
Special to the Tribune

First, strip tease became an exercise class for gym members to take as an alternative to aerobics. The sexy trend continued with pole-dancing instruction and burlesque fitness classes.

Now there's go-go dancing, the antithesis of sexy gym moves. The class, at The Galaxie Chicago, 2603 W. Barry Ave., is based on kooky '60s dance moves. Think "Laugh-In," not strip club.

The class was co-founded by Kaara Kallen, a dance-class enthusiast for more than a decade. "I hate the gym. I'm a big believer in having fun while you exercise," said Kallen, 33, of Chicago. "Fun" to Kallen means doing the jerk, shimmying and other '60s go-go moves. It's a workout she and another instructor have turned into a 60-minute exercise class.

The workout begins with situps and pushups. Then, it's 35 to 45 minutes of non-stop dancing that ends with a simple cooldown. Kallen keeps choreography basic so the dancing doesn't stop.

Unlike other dance classes such as salsa or hip-hop, Kallen said, go-go is not to be taken se-



Tribune photo by Bonnie Trafelet
Kaara Kallen shows the class how it's done at The Galaxie Chicago.

riously. "There is no raw emotion with this; it's fun and goofy," Kallen said.

It may not be serious, but it is meant as a proper workout. During upbeat songs like "Hey, Mickey," Kallen said, participants should expect a heart rate between 120 and 150.

Elizabeth Parenteau is a class regular. She alternates go-go dancing with an elliptical machine several times a week. Go-go, she added, can be just as intense as a workout at the gym.

"You definitely sweat; it's a workout. They tell you to wear gym shoes and come prepared to sweat," said Parenteau, 42, of Chicago.

Moves range from doing the jerk to torso separations to work the stomach, Kallen said.

The classes were first offered during the summer and have attracted all types of women. Kallen said that men are welcome and that the class is for any age and fitness level. Participants should be prepared to move the whole time, but Kallen said certain movements can be adapted to accommodate beginners.

The new session runs Oct. 6 to Nov. 10. Classes are at 11 a.m. Saturdays. No registration is required; walk-ins are welcome. The cost is \$12 per class. Questions can be e-mailed to gogotastic@gmail.com.

See Kallen perform with the The Reevelettes go-go group <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6JL7t72ospA>

DISCOVERIES

Colonoscopy does have alternatives

A new generation of fecal blood tests can screen for colon cancer with unprecedented accuracy, researchers report. But the easily available tests are greatly underused, said study author Dr. James Allison, an investigator with the Kaiser Permanente division of research in Oakland, Calif.

"A lot of gastroenterologists think that colonoscopy is the only test for colon cancer," Allison said.

But colonoscopy also is expensive, uncomfortable and carries the risk of damage such as internal bleeding, he said. A simple fecal occult blood test, costing less than \$30 and done in minutes, can single out that small percentage of the general population that would benefit from colonoscopy, Allison said.

At least 10 fecal occult blood tests have been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Allison said. The most widely used is Hemoccult, which has been shown in controlled trials to reduce mortality from colorectal cancer.

Good diet could cure fatty liver

Diets high in quick-burning carbohydrates may cause fatty liver disease, which can lead to liver failure and death, according to a study in mice by researchers at Children's Hospital Boston.

If these findings are confirmed in humans, it may mean that fatty liver disease can be prevented and possibly treated through dietary changes, the study authors said.

They fed mice either a high- or low-glycemic index diet. In humans, examples of high-gly-

cemic foods, which raise blood sugar quickly, include white bread, white rice, most prepared breakfast cereals and concentrated sugar. Vegetables, fruits, beans and unprocessed grains are examples of low-glycemic foods, which raise blood sugar slowly.

"Our experiment creates a very strong argument that a high-glycemic diet causes, and a low-glycemic diet prevents, fatty liver in humans," said research leader Dr. David Ludwig, director of the Optimal Weight for Life program at Children's Hospital Boston.

Prescription alert sounded on birth defects

American women of childbearing age commonly take prescription drugs that can cause birth defects, but only about half are receiving contraceptive counseling from their doctors or other health-care providers, a new study finds.

Researchers at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine are calling for increased awareness of this issue among doctors and women who may become pregnant.

"We found that over the course of a year, one in six women of reproductive age filled a prescription for a medication labeled by the Food and Drug Administration as increasing risk of fetal abnormalities," first study author Dr. Eleanor Bimla Schwarz, assistant professor in the departments of medicine and obstetrics, gynecology and reproductive medicine, said in a statement.

"Unfortunately, many women filling prescriptions that can increase the risk of birth defects remain at risk of pregnancy," Schwarz said.

About half of pregnancies in the United States are unintended, according to the study.