



LAUGHING YOUR WAY TO HEALTH & other practical advice

By **GEORGIA WITKIN** • Grandparents.com

Science is proving some old adages you might have doubted are true, and that some common activities you never imagined could harm you can be dangerous.

Read on as Dr. Georgia Witkin, a psychologist and an expert on family relationships and stress management, reports on medical discoveries that could make a difference in your life.

LAUGHTER IS THE BEST MEDICINE

Cardiologists at the University of Maryland Medical Center in Baltimore studied 300 people, half who had heart disease and half who did not, and found that those with heart disease were 40 percent less likely to laugh in a variety of situations. They were also less likely to recognize humor or to use it to get out of uncomfortable spots. The researchers are not yet sure how laughter might help the heart, but it certainly seems true when it comes to the heart, laughter is good medicine.

Please see **LAUGHING** on 2C

Vaccine targets brain tumors

The treatment being studied at the University of Miami is given after a patient is already diagnosed, not before like a polio or flu shot.

By **FRED TASKER**

McClatchy-Tribune News Service

MIAMI — When U.S. Sen. Edward Kennedy was diagnosed with a glioblastoma of the brain in May 2009, doctors understood there was little chance he could survive it. He died that August.

“That’s a malignant tumor. The current five-year survival rate is 1 percent,” said Ricardo Komotar, a neurooncologist at Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center.

But cancer specialists from the University of Miami Medical School and nine other U.S. institutions are well into clinical experiments aimed at ending the tumor’s fatal reputation.

“We’re not going to cure it,” said Komotar, who is also director of surgical neurooncology at University of Miami Hospital. “Our goal is to convert it into a chronic condition like high blood pressure or diabetes that you can live the rest of your life with and live a very normal life.”

Their weapon: a brain cancer vaccine. It’s not a preventive vaccine like a flu or polio shot, given to ward off disease. Instead, it’s a “therapeutic” vaccine given after the patient already has the tumor. It’s still called a vaccine because, unlike most cancer medicines, it doesn’t attack the disease directly. Instead, it marshals the body’s immune system to attack it.

Please see **VACCINE** on 2C

JOIN THE STUDY

The University of Miami has begun recruiting volunteers for the study. A patient must have been diagnosed by MRI with a glioblastoma, but must not have started surgery, chemotherapy or radiation. That’s because study surgeons must remove an intact tumor to use in creating the vaccine. To volunteer, call Dr. Ricardo Komotar at 305-689-2427 or rkomotar@med.miami.edu.

Research: Better managing blood sugar might stave off dementia

Scientists say treating diabetes and risk factors linked to it now could help prevent dementia cases later in life.

By **SHARI ROAN**
Los Angeles Times

Two of the most worrisome trends in healthcare — the soaring rates of Type 2 diabetes and dementia — have biological factors in common. And scientists are beginning to think that

is more than just a coincidence.

In fact, many now believe that proper control of blood sugar could pay dividends in the future by reducing the number of people stricken by Alzheimer’s disease, other forms of dementia and even the normal cognitive

decline that comes with age.

The key characteristics found in the development of heart disease and stroke — clogged arteries and inflammation in cells — also affect the brain, said Debra Cherry, executive vice president of the Alzheimer’s Assn. California Southland.

“What is good for the reduction of diabetes risk is also good for reduction

of the risk of cognitive impairment,” she said.

About 6.8 million people in the U.S. have some type of dementia. Alzheimer’s disease is the most common, affecting 5.4 million people, a number projected to double by 2040, according to the Alzheimer’s Association. The cause is unknown, although studies show people with the disease

accumulate clumps of a protein called beta amyloid in their brains. There are no treatments to slow or stop the disease process.

More than 8 percent of American adults and children have either Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes, a number that is expected to grow in step with the rise

Please see **DEMENTIA** on 2C

PICKS

The Up band, a stylish band that syncs with the Apple iPhone, **aims to gently prod us into making better choices.** Up syncs with an app that tracks sleep patterns, food

intake and general physical activity. The Jawbone Up is \$100 and available at Apple, AT&T, Best Buy and Target and at www.jawbone.com, www.apple.com and www.att.com.

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