



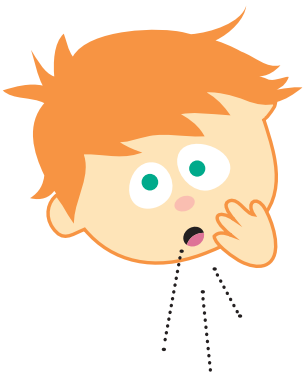
# THE YEAR IN HEALTH

A look back at some of the top health-related news stories of 2012



The Institute of Medicine confirmed what most of us who pay doctors' bills have known for years: The U.S. health-care system is sick and needs to purge itself of excess procedures, paperwork and other waste. The September report says \$750 billion a year is frittered away on unnecessary services, inefficient delivery of care, excess administrative costs, inflated prices, prevention failures and fraud.

In a decision that seemed to surprise many, confound some and confuse a couple of media organizations, the Supreme Court finally ruled on the legitimacy of the Affordable Care Act with a rousing—sort of. The court refused to strike down one of the law's most controversial elements: a requirement that individuals had to buy health insurance or pay for not having it. Pundits pointed to one of the court's most conservative members, Chief Justice John Roberts, as the likely deciding vote on the issue, and indeed he was—he called it a tax and said it was perfectly within Congress' right to enact, thereby upholding the mandate and allowing "Obamacare" to go forward.



Whooping cough, also known as pertussis, is getting a second wind, with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reporting the highest number of cases in over five years. In July, the CDC confirmed 18,000 cases nationally, which was double the amount reported during the same time period in 2011. The largest outbreaks were in Washington state, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Colorado.

Starting in March 2013, New Yorkers craving a big gulp of their favorite soft drink will need to utter four magic words: "Make it a double." The city's restaurants and concession stands will be forbidden from selling sugary beverages over 16 ounces, thanks to Mayor Michael Bloomberg's recent mission to improve people's health whether they like it or not.



The debate is over—at least until the next study is completed. Earlier this year, millions of Whole Foods and Trader Joe's shoppers were shocked to learn that eating organic isn't necessarily healthier than more conventional choices. Spending more for organic produce may limit your exposure to pesticides, but the food itself wasn't found to be more nutritious.

The Advisory Council on Alzheimer's Research, Care and Services set an ambitious new goal this year to come up with an effective treatment for the disease by 2025. The council and its recommendations are part of a new law called the National Alzheimer's Project Act, which seeks to develop a national plan to address the disease and its treatment.



Men's proclivity for beer, Spam and driving fast may *not* be the cause for them dying sooner than women after all. The real answer as to why females often outlive males may end up coming from studying the lifecycle of the common fruit fly. Researchers in Australia and the United Kingdom have discovered a mutation in the mitochondrial DNA of fruit flies that causes males to age faster. So, what does a fly have in common with a human? Turns out, the flies' biology is similar to other animals, including humans.

