

HEALTH



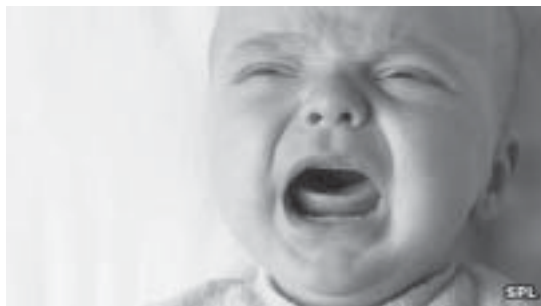
Nicotine 'may aid memory for in early dementia' Nicotine patches may improve the memory of elderly people experiencing the earliest symptoms of dementia, researchers suspect. The patches appear to give a cognitive boost to people with mild memory impairment. The findings, published in the journal *Neurology*, come from a small study of 67 people over a period of six months. Experts say the results are not conclusive, merely hinting of a

benefit and do not mean people should smoke. The health risks of smoking massively outweigh any potential nicotine benefits. And nicotine is known to be addictive. Longer and larger studies are now needed to fully assess nicotine's effect on memory and whether it might point the way to new treatments for Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia, they say. **Early promise** There are some 820,000 people in the UK living with dementia. Although some drugs are already available that can lessen some of the symptoms of the disease, there is no cure for this progressive disorder. Memory and cognition are some of the first functions that begin to fail in a person with dementia. They may find it difficult to recall recent events or facts or become increasingly confused, even when in familiar surroundings, for example. Scientists have known for some time that the brain contains receptors that respond to nicotine and that a number of these are lost in Alzheimer's. The latest work found that six months of treatment with nicotine patches appeared to improve how well individuals with "pre-dementia" or mild cognitive impairment (MCI) performed on tests designed to assess memory, attention and response times. After six months of treatment, the nicotine-treated group regained 46% of normal performance for age on long-term memory, whereas the placebo group worsened by 26% over the same time period. However, the findings were not statistically significant - a measure investigators need results to meet in order to rule out any chance findings. The scientists say more studies are now needed to confirm their preliminary findings. Lead author Dr Paul Newhouse, of Vanderbilt University School of Medicine in Nashville, said: "This study provides strong justification for further research into the use of nicotine for people with early signs of memory loss. "We do not know whether benefits persist over long periods of time and provide meaningful improvement." Derek Hill, professor of medical imaging science at University College London, said the study gave some exciting evidence that mild memory problems might be treatable before they develop into full blown dementia. But he added: "Nicotine is just one of the existing or experimental drugs that could prove beneficial for this patient group. It should encourage more investment into research into possible treatments. "It is quite likely that no treatment will help everyone - and so new diagnostic tests to match patients to treatments may be also needed to tackle dementia." *BBC*

HEALTH



Routine aspirin 'may cause harm' Healthy people who take aspirin to prevent a heart attack or stroke could be doing more harm than good, warn researchers. An analysis of more than 100,000 patients, published in *Archives of Internal Medicine*, concluded the risk of internal bleeding was too high. The UK-led study said only people with a history of heart problems or stroke should take the tablets. Experts said any decision should be made with a doctor. Aspirin helps people who have had a heart attack or stroke. It prevents blood clots from forming by preventing cells, known as platelets, from sticking together. By reducing the number of clots formed, the tablets reduce the risk of another heart attack or stroke. There have also been suggestions that the drug can prevent some cancers, however, the drug is known to increase the chance of internal bleeding, including bleeds on the brain. The discussion has been whether at-risk or even healthy people should also take aspirin. **Official guidelines were issued in 2005 by the Joint British Societies**, which includes the British Cardiac Society, British Hypertension Society and The Stroke Association. It recommended 75 mg of aspirin a day for high risk patients over the age of 50. The *Drugs and Therapeutics Bulletin* said in 2008 that **preventative aspirin should be abandoned** unless there was already evidence of cardiovascular disease. **Good or bad?** Researchers analysed data from nine trials, from a total of 102,621 patients. They said that while there was a 20% reduction in non-fatal heart attacks in people taking aspirin, there was no reduction in deaths from heart attack, stroke or cancer. Meanwhile the risk of potentially life threatening internal bleeding increased by 30%. Lead researcher Prof Kausik Ray, from St George's, University of London, told the BBC: "If you treat 73 people for about six years you will get one of these non-trivial bleeds. "If you treat about 160 people for the same period of time, you're preventing one heart attack that probably wouldn't have been fatal anyway. "It suggests that the net benefit for aspirin is not there, it certainly doesn't prolong life. If you think about it the net benefit, actually there is net harm. The study followed patients for an average of six years. An analysis led by Prof Peter Rothwell, from Oxford University, suggested that regularly taking aspirin **reduced the risk of a series of cancers**, when patients were followed for much longer. Prof Rothwell said the new study was "very nicely done, but I don't think it develops [the argument] much further". He added: "It really just emphasises the need for a more detailed analysis of how risks change over time." Natasha Stewart, senior cardiac nurse at the British Heart Foundation, said: "Aspirin can help reduce the risk of heart attack or stroke among those with known heart disease, and this group of people should continue to take aspirin as prescribed by their doctor." Our advice is that people who don't have symptomatic or diagnosed heart disease shouldn't take aspirin because the risk of internal bleeding may outweigh the benefits. "If you're taking prescribed aspirin and have any concerns, don't simply stop taking it. Always talk to your doctor first." *BBC*



Breastfed babies 'are more cranky and cry more' New mums should be advised that it is normal for their baby to cry more if they are breastfed, say experts. The Medical Research Council team says this irritability is natural, and although formula-fed babies may appear more content and be easier to pacify, breast is still best. If parents have more realistic expectations more may stick with breastfeeding, they hope. Most UK mums

try to breastfeed. Within months the rate drops to a third. The Department of Health recommends that mothers exclusively breastfeed for the first six months after birth. The most common reason given for women to stop breastfeeding is that "Breast milk alone didn't satisfy my baby", which the MRC scientists say reflects their perception of irritability as a negative signal. But they say this crankiness in babies is normal and just their natural way of communicating their needs to their mother and is no cause for alarm. For example, some cries will be down to tiredness not hunger. And the reason formula babies are so serene could well be because they are overfed. Lead investigator Dr Ken Ong said: "Bottle-fed babies may appear more content, but research suggests that these infants may be overnourished and gain weight too quickly. "Our findings are essentially similar to other stages of life: people often find that eating is comforting." In their study, they asked more than 300 mums to comment on the temperament of their own baby and to state whether they were using breast or bottle. Overall, 137 of the infants were exclusively breastfed, 88 were exclusively bottle-fed, and 91 were fed with a mixture of formula and breast milk. Breastfed babies were deemed to have "more challenging temperaments" and tended to cry more. Rosie Dodds, of the National Childbirth Trust, said the new observations were useful for parents. "Mothers and babies may experience starting to breastfeed as demanding or stressful in this society where bottle-feeding is seen as the norm and breastfeeding is unfamiliar to many new parents. "It would be interesting to compare this with countries where almost all babies are breastfed. "We often hear from mothers who say that once both they and their baby got the hang of it, breastfeeding was a breeze." *BBC*

SOLUTION

Across: 1. Pane 4. Staking 8. Hedgerow 9. Rev 11. Ostler 13. Wyvem 14. Tunis 15. Nett 17. Gist 18. Snick 20. Tomboy 21. Hectic 24. Pal 25. Behaving. 26. Torment 27. Nope **Down:** 2. Avert 3. Eaglet 4. Spry 5. Always 6. Israeli 7. Give notice 10. Going to pot 12. Runny 13. Witch 16. Tumbler 18. Sombre 19. Kelvin 22. Ton-up 23. What

6	9	4	8	7	2	5	3	1
2	1	5	3	6	9	8	4	7
7	8	3	4	5	1	2	6	9
9	6	2	5	4	8	7	1	3
4	7	1	6	2	3	9	8	5
5	3	8	9	1	7	6	2	4
8	2	9	7	3	4	1	5	6
1	4	6	2	9	5	3	7	8
3	5	7	1	8	6	4	9	2

The Da Vinci Book Quizzes:
B. Lionardo

The Rock Pop Trivia Book Quiz:

35. 'A Design For Life' (Manic Street Preachers, from *Everything Must Go*, 1996)
36. 'All Along The Watchtower' (Jimi Hendrix Experience, from *Electric Ladyland*, 1968. Originally recorded and written by Bob Dylan)
37. 'Firestarter' (Prodigy, from *The Fat Of The Land*, 1997)
38. 'Young Guns (Go For It)' (Wham! from *Fantastic*, 1983)
39. 'Big Sur' (The Thrills, from *So Much For The City*, 2003)
40. 'Ghost Town' (The Specials, 1981)

KAKURO SOLUTION

		13		85	
679		5978			
529		59		19	
78		24		79	
	3978		423		
7581		9846			
245		9856			
	97	27	37		
51		18		259	
8712		938			
	29		24		

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