

Welcome to a new day (and night)

**NIGHT&DAY**  
ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

**SIGN ON**  
SAN DIEGO

 PRINT THIS

## Wellnews: All the news that's fit

By [Scott LaFee](#), UNION-TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

Monday, March 15, 2010 at 12:02 a.m.

### THE ENEMY WITHIN

Overeating and under-exercising may not be entirely to blame for the obesity epidemic.

There's also the matter of the organisms living in your gut.

A new study, published in the journal *Science*, suggests that hordes of voracious intestinal bacteria may cause appetites to balloon, resulting in excessive weight and a host of related health problems, such as elevated cholesterol levels, high blood pressure and insulin resistance. Worse, the bacteria are capable of spreading from one host to another.

In other words, fat may be contagious.

"It could be the case that bacteria are involved in obesity in a way that's transmissible between people," said Rob Knight, a researcher at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

The study was conducted in mice genetically manipulated so that their immune system could not filter out some forms of invasive bacteria. The mice ate 10 percent more than normal mice and exhibited a variety of metabolic problems. Researchers think something similar might be occurring with some obese people. It has already been shown that intestinal bacterial populations differ between obese and lean humans.

### GET ME THAT. STAT!

One way to reduce obesity may be to tax junk food. A University of Buffalo study found that a 12.5 percent tax on high-calorie, low-nutrient items like potato chips and hot dogs reduced the total calories purchased by 6.5 percent.

### LIFE IN BIG MACS

One hour of riding in a car burns 68 calories (based on a 150-pound person) or the equivalent of one-tenth of a Big Mac with cheese.

### BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

It has been estimated that even if the stomach, spleen, 80 percent of the intestines, one kidney, one lung and virtually every organ from the pelvic and groin region were removed, a human being could still survive. With

medical assistance, of course.

## **OBSERVATION**

“One of the most difficult things to contend with in a hospital is the assumption on the part of the staff that just because you have lost your gallbladder you have also lost your mind.”

— Humorist Jean Kerr

## **EPITAPHS**

He lived

And died

By suicide

— Headstone of a coroner who killed himself by hanging (Sussex, England)

## **STORIES FOR THE WAITING ROOM**

Young children are influenced by advertising earlier than previously thought, University of Michigan researchers say. They found that children as young as three can readily recognize commercial brands marketed at them. The most commonly recognized brand was McDonald's, followed closely by other brands of fast food, soda and toys.

## **PHOBIA OF THE WEEK**

Mageirocophobia — fear of cooking

## **MEDTRONICA**

In the pipeline

[corante.com/pipeline](http://corante.com/pipeline)

The author of this blog is Derek Lowe, an organic chemist who has worked for several pharmaceutical companies. The view is from the inside, with Lowe pontificating on drug research (good and bad), Big Pharma and the related issues.

### **Find this article at:**

<http://www.signonsandiego.com/news/2010/mar/15/well3162010>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

© Copyright 2007 Union-Tribune Publishing Co. • A Copley Newspaper Site

Welcome to a new day (and night)

**NIGHT&DAY**  
ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE