

WebMD Health Releases Top Ten Health Stories of 2003

Food, SARS and Hypertension Concerns Top the List

NEW YORK, Dec. 23 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- WebMD Health, the leading source of online health information and educational services for consumers and physicians, today released a list of the most significant health stories from 2003, as determined by the physicians and medical editors at WebMD Health at <http://my.webmd.com/content/pages/15/95910.htm> :

#1 - Nutrition: Obesity and Weight Loss

At the top of WebMD's list of stories for 2003 is a topic, in one form or another, that is rarely off people's minds: food. Consumer's complex relationship with food lies at the root of widespread obesity, one of this nation's largest health problems. Americans choose diets -- and defend them relentlessly -- to try and contain their waistlines; they undergo major surgery to limit what they can eat; they worry about lurking dangers of trans fats, that until this year most of us knew nothing about. Food: It's much more than what's for dinner.

#2 - A New Infectious Disease: SARS

It started in a province of China and quickly spread around the world. Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, quickly dubbed SARS, infected thousands and killed hundreds, all the while reminding us that nature still holds all the cards. Are we still at risk, are we more prepared for future outbreaks, and have we learned anything?

#3 - New Rules and Risk for Cardiovascular Disease

One night last May many people went to bed healthy, only to wake up the next day and find out they weren't quite as healthy as they thought. When new federal guidelines created a new risk category called "pre-hypertension," more people found out they were at increased risk of cardiovascular disease. What did this mean for you?

#4 - Cancer

Cancer makes the WebMD Top 10 for the third year in a row, as scientists continue to make strides against this dreaded disease. Two developments top the list: the success of a whole new way of treating it -- an approach called anti-angiogenesis -- and an advance in preventing recurrence of breast cancer with a new drug called Femara.

#5 - An 'Extreme' Year: Plastic Surgery

New products, new techniques, new TV programs ... plastic surgery is increasingly on everyone's minds. What was once an oddity associated only with Hollywood is now a staple for many more women -- and men -- from all walks of life. But that doesn't mean the controversy has died down, as this year's revival of debate over silicone breast implants reminds us.

#6 - Prescription Drugs and Seniors

More people are living longer, and staying healthier in their later years, thanks in part to prescription drugs. But there is a price tag to that success, and it's hitting seniors right in the wallet. To help, many seniors have been making a run for the border to buy their drugs more cheaply in Canada. Others have been using the Internet. Are these safe -- and truly cheaper -- alternatives? Does Congress, which passed a prescription drug plan this year, have a better idea, or is it just political posturing?

#7 - Flu Fear

Flu season hit early and hard this year, clogging doctors' offices and clinics full of sick people and people seeking flu shots. The virus is worrying people across the nation, and the rush for flu shots may be straining the supply of flu vaccine. Is the flu really worse this year, and if so, why?

#8 - ADHD Grows Up

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder as a condition has been around for a while, but this year you could say it grew up. Not only do many consider the condition a problem in children, but now in adults, too. There's also a new drug, and others in the pipeline. And there's still a lot of controversy over whether it's really a legitimate problem that calls for medicating more kids and more adults.

#9 - Diabetes Wake-Up Call

Diabetes is a serious condition that many people don't take seriously ... until they're told they have it. And the numbers are growing by more than a million people a year. And this year, doctors lowered the threshold for a condition called pre-diabetes -- which means an estimated 20 million Americans now have this problem. Isn't it time we finally all start paying attention?

#10 - Erectile Dysfunction (ED)

The term E-D became a lot more recognizable this year, not because the problem of erectile dysfunction got any worse, but because the solution got easier. Viagra started the revolution, and this year two new medications were approved in the U.S., Levitra and Cialis, to give men even more choice. What

does this mean for men, and their relationships?

To interview an expert on any of the above issues, please e-mail jmeyer@webmd.net.

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