

56 Percentage of women who say their belly is bigger than they like, according to a survey conducted by Harris Interactive. Only 44 percent of men felt the same way about theirs. METRO/NC



"I'm usually go-go-go, but when I hit the wall, that's it — I'm done. If my body is tired or injured, I'll let it rest."

Tennis star Maria Sharapova, left, in the September issue of Shape magazine METRO/NC

Body & Soul

Pretty in ink?

If you're having second thoughts about your tattoo, removal is looking better than ever

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PROFILE. Permanently signing someone else's name anywhere on your body might seem like a wonderful expression of your undying devotion, but what if love ends and you still have that pesky tattoo scripted with a name you can't even bear to say in public? Take heart: That ink might not be as indelible as you and the tattoo artist might have thought.

There are several ways to remove tats, including excision (cutting it out surgically), dermabrasion (sanding the skin with an abrasive instrument) and salabrasion (sanding the skin with salt), but none are as popular or as effective as laser surgery.

"Lasers selectively damage tattoo ink without injury to the surrounding skin," explains Dr. Roy

Geronemus, director of The Laser & Skin Surgery Center of New York. "So unlike other techniques, which would have to remove skin or injure normal skin in the process, if the correct laser is used, then you can actually get safe and effective removal of specific colors within tattoos."

BEFORE YOU call up your doctor and get the lasers beaming around that tatt of Tweety Bird (it seemed like a great idea when you were 16), there are some factors to consider. In addition to treatments being rather expensive, they also depend on what kind of tattoo you have. According to Geronemus, different colors within a tattoo are absorbed differently by laser light. Currently, laser treatment for tattoos works best with reds and blacks and is a more difficult proposition when it comes to yellow, orange

and metallic colors.

But don't expect the tatt to disappear after one session. Depending on the size and placement of the tattoo, laser removal can take anywhere from two to six treatments — and sometimes longer, especially if the tattoo was professionally done.

Skin color is also a factor. "Darker skin often interferes with the absorption of laser light, so it makes it more difficult to reach the tattoo and [can] injure some of the normal skin," Geronemus says. "You have to use the correct laser with darker skin types that will minimize that risk."

While laser treatment is not as painful as other removal methods, you can expect some side effects such as scabbing, burning or itching after each session.

"It takes time to heal after each procedure," Geronemus says. "There is

Before you take the leap

Some tips from Geronemus to consider before getting a tattoo:

- Wait one month. Chances are you will change your mind.
- Go to a professional and make sure new needles are used all the time.
- Keep the colors simple.
- Think small — smaller tattoos are easier to hide and eventually remove.
- Perhaps show your love for a person in another way.
- Remember that you will not always be buff — body changes can make tattoos less attractive in the long run.
- Plan for the future — think about your career, because many employers do not like visible tattoos in the workplace.

a very, very small risk of scarring from each procedure, but we simply don't



The tattoo artist told you this Chinese script means "wisdom," when, in fact, you later realized it means "dumb drunk girl." Maybe it's time to consider tattoo removal.

see that very often. And there is a slight risk that it will leave a slight change in pigmentation."

If you simply must get that butterfly on your hip, you might want to wait.

New York-based company Freedom-2 is set to unveil a new ink that will make that body artwork much easier to erase when you can't stand the sight of it anymore.

No More Drama

Rattling out infidelity

I have been dating a man for just over a year. It's a long-distance relationship, but we see each other every other week or so. I have always had a suspicion that he is married and recently got confirmation that he is and has two kids. I called him on it, and he confessed he has had two or three prior affairs. Since he has been lying and been incredibly disrespectful to not only me but to his family, should I tell his wife? I know it will forever affect her and their family; however, since he has been doing this for years, I feel as if I have the obligation to tell her that I am sorry, as he denied ever being married. We have had unprotected sex, so that throws another wrench into the equation.

— Bethany

One might wonder if you're setting the stage for "Jerry Springer" or trying to come up with a practical resolution to a situation for which you didn't ask. Take a look at your intentions. Are they 1) to inform

the wife because you genuinely care about her and the situation or 2) to retaliate due to feeling betrayed and lied to?

If you genuinely care about his family (even though you've never met them), what happens after you inform them? Consider the impact this may have, especially on his kids. If your motives are driven by the desire to get back at him in true "Fatal Attraction" style, think about what you really want, should you achieve this outcome. Perhaps you have a hidden wish to make him single so you can have him. If so, does he really have the qualities you seek in a partner, in light of this infidelity?

Focus efforts on yourself and what you can change, rather than on him. Getting an STD test to rule out anything that may have been con-



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tracted through unprotected sex may eliminate anxiety and help you to feel better. Learn from this experience and apply it to future relationships. This will help you to avoid similar situations and to know with more certainty if a guy is boyfriend or "Springer" material.

Jonathan Alpert is a licensed psychotherapist with offices in Manhattan and Philadelphia. Do you have a question you want Jonathan to answer? Send an e-mail to jonathan.alpert@metro.us.

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15

Percent of adults who are happy with their weight, according to a survey conducted by Albolene. Men are twice as likely as women to be happy with their weight (20 percent versus 10 percent, respectively). **METRO/NC**

Body & Soul

Beside the point

For the open-minded, acupuncture can help heal the body

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PROFILE. The Chinese medicinal science of acupuncture has been practiced for more than 2,000 years, and, if longevity is any indicator, it's here to stay. Concerned primarily with harmonizing the body's energy flow, or qi (chi), acupuncture has been used to treat everything from back pain to infertility by balancing this flow through 14 major meridians of the body, including major organs.

For some in Western culture, where a compound of organic and synthetic materials in pill form usually serves as a cure-all, the thought of bringing about physical and mental harmony while looking like a veritable hedgehog is not appealing.

"The needle is placed at certain points of the body that trigger certain types of stimulation," explains Iris Netzer, an acupuncturist who runs Acupuncture Remedies in the holistic offices of Informed Fitness in New York City. "We learn that when you trigger a certain point, a certain function will happen, facilitating the kind of flow that would give the optimal results you would like. The objective when I am inserting the needle is to obtain the qi."

BUT DOES IT HURT? While the answer to that question can vary from person to person, the straight answer, from personal experience, is no.

On a visit to Netzer's unsurprisingly serene office, the question increasingly became irrelevant once our hour together drew to a close. Beginning with a series of health and personal questions aimed at identifying my individual needs of and expectations from acupuncture, I



In the practice of acupuncture, there are seemingly endless points on the body that trigger certain types of stimulation to harmonize the body's energy flow, or qi (chi).

was accompanied to a small, neat room, where I derobed and hopped atop a comfortable table.

As a sufferer of migraines, I rely heavily on over-the-counter painkillers and dark rooms to get pain-free. A thin needle was far from intimidating when compared to the jackhammering pain of a migraine. Talking me through insertions in my legs, hands and head and instructing me to take and expel deep breaths at each point, Netzer guaranteed a virtually pain-free session that was both pleasant and calming.

"WHAT WE ARE learning more and more, especially in Western medicine, is how much the mind and body are connected," Netzer says. "That is what [acupuncture] is all about. There is no separation between the mind and the body. If you are under physical stress, it affects

"What we are learning more and more, especially in Western medicine, is how much the mind and body are connected."

Netzer

you emotionally and mentally. And your emotional and mental stress can affect you physically.

"There are a lot of people who have a disconnect between the mind and the body. I try to explain to people ways to listen to



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what their bodies are telling them. Exercise is important. Sleep is important. Eating healthier is important. Pretty basic, but sometimes this sounds strange. Other times, it just confirms what they already know, so that when they are ready for acupuncture, they are also ready to make lifestyle changes all around."

THE EFFICACY of acupuncture is still under question, with some in the medical community arguing that it's a glorified placebo, while others assert that it is a viable form of fine-tuning the body to better defend and heal itself. Netzer herself notes that people who approach their health from a holistic perspective, such as yogis, are often more receptive to the powers of acupuncture. Whatever your take, the point remains that maintaining a healthy mind-body balance usually bodes well for overall personal fitness and happiness.

No More Drama

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The difference between love and lust

I am involved in a four-year affair at the workplace. Yes, it makes us both want to come to work daily. From day one, we agreed that neither of us would ever consider leaving our families. It's just fun. We are both married, but the excitement is incredible. I have fallen in love with him, but he says it's purely lust. What's the difference between love and lust? — Vanessa

Although you both were in agreement from day one about the nature of your workplace affair and saw it as "lust," that apparently has changed, at least on your part. The line between love and lust can be crystal clear sometimes. According to the trusty American Heritage Dictionary, love is: an intense affectionate concern for another person. While lust is: sexual craving, especially excessive or unrestrained. Life, however, particularly the part involving feelings and emotions, isn't always as simple as what is in black and white. If you were to hit the streets and ask 10 passersby to define love and lust, you'd likely get 10 different responses. Whether it's a marriage lasting a lifetime or a supercharged summer fling, each comes with its special memories and definitions.

In fidelity aside for now, as that may be a larger problem, how do you reconcile your love with his lust in this relationship? Lust can healthily occur within the context of a loving relationship and often provides a sexual spark, but love existing within a lustful relationship may prove problematic. Lust is more about getting one's needs met and usually selfishly placing them ahead of the partner's. This is counterproductive toward building a mutually loving relationship. More important than this difference, however, is probably the huge mismatch between what your husband thinks he has with you and what truly exists given your workplace activities.

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Saving face

Is your facial cream safe?

SKIN CARE. New research suggests you think twice before using a cream that contains hydroquinone, the fastest-acting spot lightener. Although the FDA had approved the ingredient, it declared hydroquinone a potential carcinogen last summer and has proposed a ban of all over-the-counter products formulated

with it. (The European Union has already implemented one.)

But "on the whole, the dermatological community opposes the motion," says Jeannette Graf, M.D., a dermatologist in Great Neck, N.Y., who notes the EU is generally quick to bar controversial ingredients. "The cancer studies were done on animals that



Sure, it looks harmless, but make sure what you're putting on your face is completely safe.

cream. I don't think the ban should happen."

Even if it does, doctors can still dispense the fade fix at a prescription-strength level of 4 percent. (Supervised use of the ingredient would not be banned.) Or choose from alternatives, such as arbutin and vitamin C, which block melanin production and even out skin, albeit more slowly.

ingested hydroquinone in doses no person would ever be exposed to with a

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For more information, go to Self.com.

Back Pain?

Boston, MA – According to a recently released report, most low back pain (and disc, or leg pain) sufferers have difficulty getting rid of pain.

Some use heat, ice, and medication. From sleeping on the floor, to injections for pain, back pain treatments vary. But most people hope to avoid surgery and, thanks to a new report, back pain sufferers finally have better options. To get a copy of the free "Back Pain Relief Report", call toll-free, 1-800-441-6467. (Toll-free, 24 hour recorded message).

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A special contest just for kids & their families. See inside for details.



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Metro Monday, July 2, 2007

Edited by Nadia Croes, nadia.coes@metro.us

67 Percentage of all AIDS cases in the United States that are black women, according to BlackAmericaWeb.com. Black women are the fastest growing group of new cases. METRO/NC

Strength in numbers

The newly launched DietTelevision.com uses the power of an online community to help dieters lose weight. The free weight-loss Web site helps you pick the right diet and exercise plan depending on your food preferences and lifestyle and offers support from members, ways to track your progress and information from experts. METRO/NC



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Body & Soul

Your own advocate

Book offers guidance on how to be a 'Smart Patient'

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INTERVIEW. The state of health care in the United States is no laughing matter. Insured or not, getting the best out of a trip to the doctor's office or the hospital emergency room has become an exercise in forethought and a matter of self-education. Drs. Michael F. Roizen and Mehmet C. Oz have collaborated on the witty and engaging "You: The Smart Patient: An Insider's Handbook for Getting the Best Treatment" (Free Press, \$15), a detective-style guide on how to acquire the tools and documents necessary to empower yourself during your next medical appointment. Metro spoke

with Oz about the importance of taking the reins when it comes to our health care.

What prompted you and Dr. Roizen to take the irreverent approach that you took to writing the book?

Folks are intimidated by the health care system, so by using the crime scene metaphor, they get more comfortable with comprehending difficult material as when they watch "CSI."

What does it really mean to be a smart patient?

First, individuals need to know the rules of the game. Then, they need to help their team — which includes the individual, the family members and their health care providers — win by making useful contributions (i.e., researching

illnesses, setting a good example, encouraging compliance) and pushing the rest of the group along when they need help.

How should readers approach the book? As a guide? As a full, cover-to-cover reading experience? On a need-to-know basis?

It can be used as a guide whenever you face a health challenge. One must-read is the section on finding the right doctor and insurance. Other sections should be used if you are starting new meds or anticipating a surgery or hospitalization.

What is the one thing that you hope readers will take away from the book?

You are the world expert on your body, so don't abdicate your responsibility.

Meet the docs

Drs. Mehmet C. Oz and Michael Roizen's "It's All About You: Be The World Expert on Your Body" tour begins Saturday. An all-day workshop takes place from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Aug. 18 at the Pennsylvania Convention Center (1101 Arch St.). To reserve seats, call 800-654-5126 or go to www.hayhouse.com.

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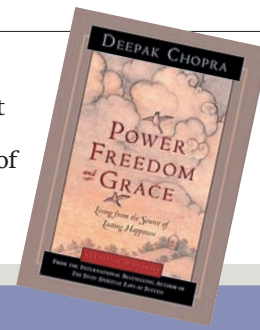
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Inner happiness

SELF-IMPROVEMENT. Media mogul Deepak Chopra offers up his wisdom in his latest book, "Power, Freedom, and Grace: Living from the Source of Lasting Happiness" (Amber-Allen, \$19) and explains why happiness for a reason is just another form of misery. Say what? OK, so you may need to read carefully. He draws upon ancient Vedanta philosophy to explain how knowing who we truly are brings us to the source of happiness — not happiness due to specific things or events. **METRO/NC**



60M

DIABETES. Number of Americans who have diabetes and pre-diabetes, according to the American Diabetes Association. The disease is the fifth deadliest, and one-third of Americans don't know they have it. **METRO/NC**

Body & Soul

When the sun don't shine

Lack of sunlight during the winter could be giving you the blues

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PROFILE. It might be difficult for East Coasters to conceive of it, but winter is actually here. While there haven't been any tell-tale signs of snow or freezing temperatures on our side of the United States, approximately 10 to 20 percent of Americans suffer from winter depression, medically referred to as seasonal affective disorder (SAD).

"Seasonal affective disorder was actually discovered in the Pacific Northwest where we have really gray and dreary winters," says Dr. Eugene Baker, vice president of employee assistance programs for United Behavioral Health, based in Portland, Ore. "[Doctors] started to notice that there was an increase in depression rates during the winter months. And they realized that had something to do with the lack of sunshine availability."

SAD, which usually manifests itself in adults in their mid-20s and statistically affects more women than men, is marked by



Gloomy days could lead to a gloomy disposition. If you suspect you suffer from seasonal affective disorder, consult your doctor.

an increase in eating and sleeping, a loss of interest in once-enjoyable activities, irritability, lack of concentration, interpersonal conflicts often accompanied by feelings of rejection and a decrease in sex drive.

It is important to note that SAD can be a sign of a greater mental health problem, and the first line of action is always to seek the advice of a physician. However, the growing awareness of this sub-type of major depression has led to treatments that

prove effective for a wide swath of sufferers, many of whom regain a healthy mental balance with the arrival of spring.

In addition to dietary adjustments (lowering carb and caffeine intake) and aerobic and outdoor exercise, among the most popular treatment recommendations for those struggling with SAD is bright light therapy, which entails exposure to artificial light (often a 10,000-lux light box fitted with fluorescent light bulbs and UV ray-blocking capabilities) for approximately 45 minutes a day. This light simulation helps to mimic the longer days SAD sufferers typically enjoy in the summer and has proven effective in adjusting their depressed moods after one day or just a few weeks of use.

Resources

Baker suggests two sources of information that could be helpful for SAD sufferers:

Employee assistance programs: More than 90 percent of large companies in the U.S. have EAPs that can connect members with health-care professionals 24 hours a day, seven days a week, who can talk you through difficult periods and recommend services in your area. Contact a member of your human resources department to obtain your local EAP number.

211: A national initiative spearheaded by the United Way, 211 is a number you can call to be placed in contact with local community services, including mental health resources in your area.

FOR MORE aggressive cases of SAD, doctors sometimes recommend cognitive therapy in combination with light therapy to give sufferers mental tools to rework the negative emotions and attitudes that can accompany the disorder.

And last June, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved Wellbutrin XL for the prevention of major depressive episodes in patients with a history of SAD. It's the first drug approved specifically for SAD, but long-term studies have yet to show its efficacy. For the time being, look into the light.

No more drama

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Excising exes

I have problems not knowing when to cut ex-boyfriends out of my life. I attempt to be friends with them; however, that usually leads to being physically involved with them again. Often, it doesn't make us feel much better, and we use the excuse of old habits dying hard, but I also think it's a crutch if you haven't met anybody new, and there is always a part of you wishing it was like it used to be. What is a healthy amount of interaction with an ex? And when do you know if it's worth giving people a second chance, just having fun? Or is it really just a way to set yourself up for disappointment? — Anonymous

The reason he's your ex plays an important role in your decision to get back together or not. Did your ex sleep with your sister or was there a communication problem? Was he brought up on assault charges or was he too immature for a committed relationship? Take a look at the relationship breaker, and decide whether it's powerful enough to deter you from reuniting.

If there has been enough time since the split for both of you to grow and make changes, then maybe giving it another try is in the cards. On the other hand, if you're feeling lonely on a Saturday night, then maybe it's not a good idea to give it another go. Late-night calls motivated by a desire to relieve a void probably disregard the problem areas in the relationship and focus only on the positive parts. This, although fulfilling for the night, is probably temporary and won't help you move past the "old habits."

With each new relationship, there is potential to figure out what qualities are important to you in your ideal partner. Take an inventory of what you need and desire in a man, and then resolve not to settle for less, or else you're in it for only the short-term and the next breakup and disappointment might just be lurking around the corner.

Jonathan Alpert is a licensed psychotherapist with offices in Manhattan and Philadelphia.

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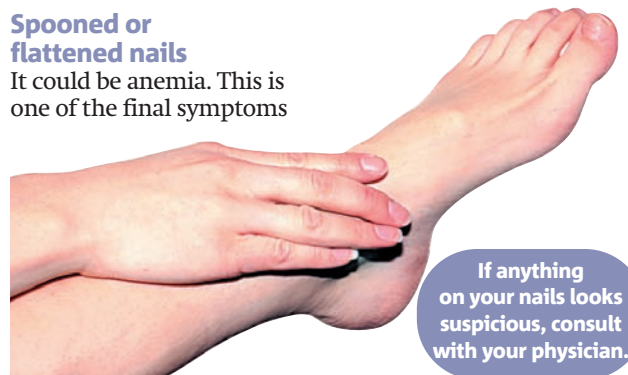
Your health is in your hands

TIPS. Your nails can reveal a lot about your body. Check your fingertips for signs of these five conditions, then use them to dial your M.D. if anything looks off.

Spooned or flattened nails

It could be anemia. This is one of the final symptoms

to appear, says Robert Brodell, M.D., a dermatologist in Warren, Ohio. A blood test can accurately check your iron levels.



If anything on your nails looks suspicious, consult with your physician.

Nails speckled with white spots

It could be a zinc deficiency. The problem is more common among vegetarians and those who eat low-protein diets. Aim for 8 milligrams of zinc a day; find it in nuts and bran.

Nails streaked with brown lines

It could be melanoma. Look at your nails during monthly skin exams. The change is an early sign; the condition (if confirmed) is likely still highly treatable, Brodell says.

Red around cuticle

It could be an infection. If you're also experiencing swelling and throbbing in the area, you may have an infection called paronychia. Antibiotics are likely in order.

Ridged nails, especially on thumbs

It could be stress. Many people run their fingers over their thumbs when stressed. Though it isn't harmful, you can protect your nails by covering them with bandages.

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