

BULLETIN



■ Eating too much red meat can harden arteries.

Historic gene loss ‘causes heart attacks’ in humans

HUMANS have heart attacks because a protective gene was lost millions of years ago, according to new research. It explains why we are prone to hardening of the arteries unlike other members of the animal kingdom, especially when eating too much red meat.

The gene, known as CMAH, produces a sugary chemical called Neu5Gc that destroys fats that clog the arteries.

In experiments, mice genetically engineered to lack it, just like humans, had an almost twofold increase in fat deposits compared to unmodified peers.

What is more, burgers sausages and bacon are high in sialic acid Neu5Gc as cattle and swine have the gene. Humans have circulating antibodies against the molecule, triggering a reaction. Neu5Gc, found on the surface of animal cells, is therefore attacked by the human immune system. Consuming red meat daily has been found to triple the risk of cardiovascular disease.

Fruit and veg diet ‘slashes diabetes risk’

EATING plenty of fruit and vegetables slashes the risk of developing diabetes by almost a quarter, according to new research. An analysis of more than 300,000 people found those whose diets were mainly plant based were 23 per cent less prone to the Type 2 form linked to obesity. The foods are rich in antioxidants that protect against the potentially fatal disease, say scientists. They improve sensitivity to insulin, the hormone that controls blood sugar, and reduce weight gain. They also combat inflammation, explained the US team. The study differentiated between healthy and less healthy plant-based foods.

NEWS DIGEST

Social enterprise signs deal with Co-op to help battle period poverty

LUCINDA CAMERON

A SOCIAL enterprise tackling period poverty is celebrating after the Co-op started selling its sanitary products. Hey Girls sells its products on a “buy one, give one” model, meaning for every pack purchased, another is donated to a girl or woman in the UK in need. Following a £50,000 investment from the Big Issue Invest (BII) Power Up programme, its daytime and overnight “Sani pads” and menstrual cups

can now be found in 184 Co-op stores across the UK. The news was announced as BII launched its investment programme for 2019 at the Co-op store in Frederick Street, Edinburgh. Celia Hodson, who founded Hey Girls with her daughters Kate and Becky, said: “Gaining a listing in one of the world’s largest consumer co-operatives, owned by millions of members, gives us a real buzz. “Co-op customers selecting a Hey Girls product in store know the more period products we sell, the more

period product we can donate to their local community. “Box for box. Simple. That’s why we’re different from all the other product manufacturers and why our values align completely with the Co-op.” BII’s Power Up programme has raised £1.4 million since 2018 and delivered more than 1,000 hours of business mentoring. Power Up Scotland, pioneered by BII, is funded by partners Aberdeen Standard Investments, the University of Edinburgh and the Scottish Government, Brodies LLP, Places for

People and Experian. It is aimed at enabling up to 20 Scottish social ventures to access loan funding of up to £50,000 over the next two years. BII chief executive Danyal Sattar said: “We’re really proud to have supported such a dynamic social enterprise. “It’s fantastic to see how the Power Up programme has made a crucial difference to social ventures such as Hey Girls.” Last year Hey Girls was listed in both Asda and Waitrose and the company is a major supplier in the

Scottish Government’s initiative to provide access to free sanitary products to pupils and students in Scotland. Communities Secretary Aileen Campbell MSP said: “It’s great to see the social enterprise Hey Girls get the help they need to expand through the Power Up Scotland programme.” Victoria Haigh, category buyer for the Co-op, said: “We are delighted to list the brand knowing that the products will give back to the wider community.”

‘Botched smear test left me with uncontrollable orgasms... it’s wrecked my life’



What should have been a routine examination in 2017 has left one East Dunbartonshire woman in despair, reports HELEN MCARDLE

A WIDOW says her “life has been wrecked” as a result of nerve damage caused by a botched smear test which means simple activities such driving over a pothole or using an escalator can trigger embarrassing orgasms. Maria, 61, from East Dunbartonshire has been struggling for nearly two years to find any effective treatment for the rare condition, known as Persistent Genital Arousal Disorder (PGAD). The mother-of-three says she cannot even speak to her adult children about the problem, and asked that only her first name is used.

However, she said she wants to make clear how debilitating the disorder is and let other sufferers “know they’re not freaks”. “People shouldn’t have to go through this and be ridiculed,” she said. “It’s far from funny. This has broken up marriages. Some women have taken their own lives. “It saps your confidence because, to be honest, there are days I wish I wasn’t here.” Her ordeal began soon after she attended Glasgow’s Stobhill Hospital for a routine gynaecological examination in September 2017. The consultant obstetrician – now retired – arrived late due to a flat tyre, and Maria said she appeared distracted. “She wasn’t focused. At one point she even said ‘my head’s still on my puncture’. Then all of a sudden she rammed this speculum into me,” said Maria. “I just gasped – so much so that the nurse was holding me and saying ‘keep breathing’.” Afterwards, Maria’s genitals became painfully swollen and in

October she began experiencing distressing symptoms for the first time which would eventually be diagnosed as PGAD, caused by damage to her pudendal nerve. “I just didn’t know what was happening. You’ve got this great arousal but it’s not going anywhere or triggered by anything. “Most of the time I feel like I am sitting on an ant’s nest. There’s times where it’s a tickle all day, but then something sets it off and it’s a full-blown orgasm. “Driving over potholes, aircraft turbulence, escalators, the vibration from violins – I don’t know how many women could say they went to a Shania Twain concert and she made them orgasm. “Ninety per cent of my life has been wrecked and the other 10% is not so great either. I had to give up volunteering because just moving can set it off. One of my friends said to me I’d become a recluse.” She has been prescribed numbing gels, pelvic floor physiotherapy and excruciating steroid injections direct into her clitoris, but the effects often wear off within hours – if they work at all. NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde even referred her to a psychologist to rule a mental cause. More recently her gynaecologist has suggested trying Botox, which can relieve symptoms in some patients, but it carries the risk of causing bladder and bowel incontinence when injected around the pubic area. Maria said: “To think that this damage was caused by a consultant’s incompetence and then you have incontinence as a result of things you



■ Maria says her life was wrecked after she underwent a smear test that went wrong. Picture: Colin Mearns

Puzzling condition torments sufferers

PERSISTENT Genital Arousal Disorder can affect both men and women, but is more common in females. It was formally recognised as a disorder in 2013 based on five specific symptoms: involuntary genital and clitoral arousal that continues for an extended period of hours, days, or months; there is no cause for the persistent genital arousal; it is not associated with sexual desire; the persistent sensations are intrusive and unwanted; the arousal does not go

away even after orgasm. Cases in men can be characterised by constant erections without sexual desire. In some cases the disorder is brought on by stress or anxiety and can be relieved by Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. Other cases have been linked to trauma to the nervous system or side effects from antidepressant withdrawal. Many cases are unexplained, however. It is estimated to affect around one per cent of young women.

appointment for June with Dutch expert Dr Marcel Waldinger, at a cost to herself of €200 an hour. In a further blow, however, Dr Waldinger suffered a sudden, fatal heart attack in May. “I was devastated,” said Maria. Finally, on July 5, NHS GGC U-turned and told Ms Swinson they would refer Maria to St Mary’s Hospital in London for treatment by Dr David Goldmeier, an expert in orgasmic disorder and persistent genital arousal. Maria is now waiting for an appointment date to be confirmed. “No woman should have to fight a battle like that for nearly two years,” she said. Ms Swinson said: “It’s disappointing that it has taken so long for the health board to acknowledge that they are not able to offer effective treatment themselves. However, I am glad to see that things are moving in a positive direction and I hope that this helps to identify a successful treatment plan for Maria.” A spokeswoman for NHS GGC said: “We have explored and exhausted all treatments available locally for this patient and have been unable to relieve their symptoms. Therefore, we have offered to refer them to a specialist consultant in London.”

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