

Science & health briefs

RESEARCH

Time warped

Bad jet lag? Blame your clocks — the ones inside your body, researchers say.

The body's sleep and wakefulness patterns are just two of the physiological processes that run on a roughly 24-hour-cycle, or circadian clock, said Hava Siegelmann, University of Massachusetts Amherst researcher who's using methods that model circadian rhythms in rats. These and other processes are coordinated by the master pacemaker, or clock, an area of the brain with a natural cycle that is about 24 hours long.

In mammals, the master clock is a group of cells called the suprachiasmatic nucleus (SCN), which lies at the base of the hypothalamus, Siegelmann said. The SCN receives information on daylight sent from the eyes' optic nerve and can be reset by environmental cues such as light.

To transition smoothly to a different time zone, the researchers recommend advancing in chunks of not more than four hours, thus allowing the body's clocks to remain coordinated.

HEALTH

HOPE walks

To increase awareness of women's reproductive system cancers, HOPE in Oklahoma is hosting an inaugural walk through the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center.

The walk will begin at 3 p.m. Sunday at the OU Physicians Building, 825 NE 10. That evening, a candlelight vigil will be held, followed by a release of balloons to honor women who have died of gynecologic cancer, as well as survivors, caregivers and supporters.

HOPE, a support group for women with gynecologic cancers, was formed in 1999.

KWTV news reporter Angela Buckelew will be the guest host for the event, which will feature presentations by physicians who specialize in gynecologic oncology.

For more information, call HOPE in Oklahoma at 271-8663, ext. 48165.

FITNESS

Carbo-nation

The nation's children are consuming ever-greater amounts of soft drinks that could increase their risk for obesity and dental disease, caution the American Dental Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Children ages 6-19 consume significantly more ounces of soft drinks each day than milk or juice.

"Sweetened drinks are the primary source of added sugar in the daily diet of children," Dr. Renee Jenkins said.

From Staff and Wire Reports