



Top Health News

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Shingles vaccine reduces dementia risk, study suggests

A major new research study has delivered “convincing” findings that the recombinant shingles vaccine may also protect against dementia.

For the study, researchers at the University of Oxford used American electronic health records to analyse the risk of dementia between the old shingles vaccine (Zostavax) and the new vaccine (Shingrix), which the US switched to in October 2017.

Researchers found that the new vaccine was associated with a 17% lower risk of dementia than its predecessor.

Shingrix was also compared to vaccines for other infections such as flu and tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis. Results suggest that the new shingles vaccine had a 23-27% reduced risk compared to those vaccines.

The researchers say this is the equivalent to 5-9 additional months without dementia and the benefits were present for men and women, but more pronounced in the latter.

“The size and nature of this study makes these findings convincing, and should motivate further research,” said study lead Dr Maxime Taquet, who is a clinical lecturer in Oxford University’s psychiatry department.

He added: “They support the hypothesis that vaccination against shingles might prevent dementia. If validated in clinical trials, these findings could have significant implications for older adults, health services, and public health.”

While these findings are promising, the research team emphasises that further investigations should be completed before Shingrix is considered as a viable

option to prevent or delay a dementia diagnosis. Recent NHS England figures show that a record number of people are being diagnosed with dementia.

Dr Sheona Scales, research director at Alzheimer’s Research UK, says it is “critical” that further research is undertaken as the root cause of the effect remains unclear.

“It isn’t clear how the vaccine might be reducing risk, nor whether the vaccine causes a reduction in dementia risk directly or whether there’s another factor at play,” she said.

The study was funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research Oxford Health Biomedical Research Centre. It has been published in the journal Nature Medicine and looked at a cohort of more than 200,000 people.

[Louis Morris, NHE](#)

New 'game changer' sepsis test could slash the time it takes to get patients the best possible treatment

A new life-saving test could dramatically cut the time it takes to treat potentially deadly sepsis by rapidly pinpointing the exact bug triggering the condition.

Currently it can take doctors several days to definitively tell what bug has triggered sepsis — the immune system’s violent reaction to an infection.

This means medics have to use a broad spectrum of medications designed to work against a host of pathogens which can be less effective than specific drugs.

But a new test, trialled by scientists in South Korea, fast-tracks this laborious

process to 12 hours.

It skips the need for microbiologists to painstakingly grow samples taken from sick patients in petri dishes to work out exactly what is behind their illness.

Instead, the cutting-edge test can tell what microorganisms are to blame by looking at genetic information lurking within a sample.

Dr Kim Tae-hyun, study co-author and an expert in quantum computing at Seoul National University, said the technology had the potential to be a ‘game changer’, The Times reported.

Fellow author Professor Kwon Sunghoon, an expert in computer engineering, added: ‘Sepsis strikes over 40 million people worldwide each year, with a mortality rate ranging from 20 per cent to 50 per cent.

‘This high mortality rate leads to over 10 million deaths annually. Thus, accurate and prompt antibiotic prescription is essential for treatment.

[Emily Stearn, Mail Online](#)

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH NEWSLETTER



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How Scottish scientists have shown inserting a parasite into your brain would help treat Alzheimer's Disease

Researchers from the University of Glasgow and Tel Aviv University have been investigating whether a common brain parasite - *Toxoplasma gondii* - can be engineered to deliver treatments directly to the brain of patients with cognitive disorders.

Scottish scientists have been developing a potential new treatment for brain disorders - by infecting people with parasites.

Researchers from the University of Glasgow and Tel Aviv University have been investigating whether a common brain parasite - *Toxoplasma gondii* - can be engineered to deliver treatments directly to the brain of patients with cognitive disorders.

Researchers said that "while most neurological conditions, including Alzheimer's Disease, Parkinson's and Rett Syndrome, have been linked in some way to protein dysfunction, targeting the problem at source has proved complex".

"Delivering therapeutics, including targeted proteins, across the blood-brain-barrier and into the correct location inside neurons is difficult and has so far limited the treatment options for these neurological conditions," the researchers said.

However, *Toxoplasma gondii* has evolved to travel from the digestive system to the brain where it secretes its proteins into neurons, which can

potentially be used to safely deliver key therapeutic proteins that could help treat neurological diseases.

Scientists at the University of Glasgow focused on engineering the parasites to deliver the MeCP2 protein, which has already been proposed as a promising therapeutic target for Rett syndrome, a debilitating neurological disorder caused by mutations in MECP2 gene.

Further experiments, in collaboration with the team from Tel Aviv University, confirmed the engineered parasites can deliver the protein to the target cell location in the laboratory, in brain organoids and in mice models.

[Joseph Anderson, The Scotsman](#)

Fresh warning over whooping cough as cases top 2,500 in a month

Health experts have issued a fresh warning over whooping cough after a substantial rise in cases in England.

Nine babies so far are known to have died between November and the end of May, while new data shows 2,591 cases of the disease were recorded in May alone.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) urged pregnant women to have the whooping cough jab to protect their babies, while parents should check their youngsters are up to date with all their immunisations.

It comes as NHS data for England shows the overall waiting list for planned treatment – such as knee and hip replacements – has risen for the second

Recipe of the Month - Naan pizza

Recipe

2 plain naan breads
2 tbs tomato puree
1 tsp dried oregano
1-2 balls vegetarian mozzarella, drained and thinly sliced
Extra virgin olive oil to serve
Fresh basil leaves to serve (optional)
Sweet red peppers and black olives

To see the method for this recipe, and for more recipes from Corrie, sign into www.heales.com and click on Healthy Eating Blog.



Blog and Photo credit:
Corrie Heale

month in a row.

An estimated 7.6 million treatments were waiting to be carried out at the end of May, relating to 6.38 million patients – up slightly from 7.57 million treatments and 6.33 million patients at the end of April.

The list hit a record high in September 2023 with 7.77 million treatments and 6.50 million patients, after which the figures began to fall, before showing an increase in both April and May this year.

The UKHSA published details on whooping cough cases for England, showing there were 555 cases in January, 920 in February, 1,427 in March and 2,106 in April.

May saw 2,591 cases confirmed, taking the total number of cases from January to May 2024 to 7,599.

In the whole of last year, there were 858 cases, the UKHSA said.

[Jane Kirby, The Standard](#)

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH NEWSLETTER



Endometriosis needs to be treated by NHS as chronic condition, experts say

Endometriosis should be treated as a chronic condition by the NHS and taken as seriously as illnesses such as diabetes and bowel disease, experts have said.

A study looking at the quality of care provided to adult patients who had been diagnosed with endometriosis found that within healthcare, the condition is often treated as multiple isolated episodes of acute care, instead of being seen as a continuum of symptoms in the same way conditions such as diabetes are recognised.

Endometriosis is a condition where tissue similar to the womb lining grows elsewhere, such as the ovaries and fallopian tubes, and can affect fertility and other pelvic organs. Symptoms include painful periods, painful bowel movements, pain when urinating and pain during or after sex. It is thought to affect about one in 10 women in the UK of reproductive age.

The report, published by the National Confidential Enquiry into Patient Outcome and Death, an independent healthcare charity, also recommended

that training for healthcare professionals should be improved to recognise the symptoms of endometriosis such as pelvic pain and heavy periods, and that patients experiencing endometriosis should be asked about how the condition affects them beyond just the physical symptoms.

Endometriosis care has long been recognised as substandard, with a previous report finding that on average women are waiting nearly nine years for a diagnosis in the UK.

Emma Cox, the chief executive of Endometriosis UK, said that the report “clearly evidences the issues faced today by those with endometriosis, and the recommendations show how improvements can – and must – be made,” and that “implementing these will not only reduce suffering for those with endometriosis, it will also save the NHS time and resources”.

Tobi Thomas, *The Guardian*

[Click on the orange text for full article](#)

Workout of the month - Lower body stretch

Exercises

1. Worlds greatest stretch
2. Hip rotation
3. Hamstring stretch
4. Glute stretch
5. Inner thigh stretch

Perform these exercises after any cardio or lower body strengthening workouts, or if you are generally just feeling tight. Just be sure your muscles are warm before stretching!

To see Carys performing the workout, and for details on how to do the exercises, log on to the Heales Medical Health and Wellbeing portal and check out the workout on our homepage.



Blog and Photo credit: Carys Swanton

Blood tests for Alzheimer's diagnosis were 91% accurate in new study

New blood tests could help doctors diagnose Alzheimer's disease faster and more accurately, researchers reported Sunday – but some appear to work far better than others.

It's tricky to tell if memory problems are caused by Alzheimer's. That requires confirming one of the disease's hallmark signs — buildup of a sticky protein called beta-amyloid — with a hard-to-get brain scan or uncomfortable spinal tap. Many patients instead are diagnosed based on symptoms and cognitive exams.

Labs have begun offering a variety of tests that can detect certain signs of Alzheimer's in blood. Scientists are excited by their potential but the tests aren't widely used yet because there's little data to guide doctors about which kind to order and when. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration hasn't formally approved any of them and there's little insurance coverage.

“What tests can we trust?” asked Dr. Suzanne Schindler, a neurologist at Washington University in St. Louis who's part of a research project examining

that. While some are very accurate, “other tests are not much better than a flip of a coin.”

Demand for earlier Alzheimer's diagnosis is increasing

More than 6 million people in the United States and millions more around the world have Alzheimer's, the most common form of dementia. Its telltale “biomarkers” are brain-clogging amyloid plaques and abnormal tau protein that leads to neuron-killing tangles...

STAT

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH NEWSLETTER



Health Promotion and Education

Heales Medical can help advise and manage proactive health promotion days that will encourage employees to adopt healthier lifestyles.

Our health promotion days specialise in the prevention of ill health and the promotion of health & well-being within your organisation.

Our services are delivered by high calibre, well qualified staff with a broad experience base and all results are assessed against National Clinical Guidelines.

During each assessment, the health professional will ask lifestyle questions about the employee's general health and give health advice.

After each assessment we will be able to provide results, advice and an information pack.

If you have any queries or are interested in having an event, please contact a Heales Occupational Health Advisor or Contract Manager for further information.



- ✓ Advice of physical activity
- ✓ Advice on healthy eating
- ✓ Advice on weight management
- ✓ Advice on stress management
- ✓ Advice on smoking, alcohol & drugs
- ✓ Understanding blood pressure
- ✓ Understanding blood cholesterol

Health and Wellbeing Portal

For more resources see our Health and Wellbeing Portal!

Our portal has a wide range of information, tips and advice to help you support your health and wellbeing, including:

- Health Promotion Blog
- COVID-19 advice
- Health & healthy eating tips
- Health Newsletter archive
- Healthy lifestyle & exercise blog
- Vegetarian blog
- Accessible apps
- Specific information and tip pages for injury, illness and disability in daily life and in the workplace
- Occupational Health information

Pages and information will be updated and added to continually, if you have any suggestions, let us know at carys.swanton@heales.com.

Ask your Line Manager for the link.

Health Promotion Calendar

Click on the event to go to their website.

AUGUST

Cycle to work day
[01/08/24](#)

SEPTEMBER

Blood Cancer Awareness Month
[01/09/24-30/09/24](#)

Urology Awareness Month
[01/09/24-30/09/24](#)

Know your numbers! Week
[02/09/24-08/09/24](#)

World Suicide Prevention Day
[10/09/24](#)

World Sepsis Day
[13/09/24](#)

World Alzheimer's Day
[21/09/24](#)

International Week of the Deaf
[23/0924-29/09/24](#)

National Eye Health Week
[23/0924-29/09/24](#)

Migraine Awareness Week
[23/0924-29/09/24](#)

Macmillan Coffee Morning
[27/09/2024](#)

National Fitness Day
[28/09/2024](#)