

SCOOP!

Breakthroughs
You Can Use

Health



• There's nothing worse than man flu.

Wonder Women

➔ **GIRLS RULE, BOYS... SNEEZE?** Women may be better than men at fighting off disease, a study in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* reports. In research on mice, scientists found that oestrogen in female rodents blocks production of a protein that slows the immune system's response to infection. Females may have stronger defences, a possible quirk of evolution that protects mothers-to-be, says lead study author Dr Maya Saleh.

ONE-WORD ANSWER

Flu

The infectious disease that costs South African corporates R2.7-billion a year due to absenteeism in the workplace
Source: www.health-e.org.za

10 000

AVERAGE NUMBER OF BACTERIA TRANSFERRED FROM A MOUTH TO A BOWL OF DIP WHEN SOMEONE "DOUBLE-DIPS" THREE TO SIX TIMES
Source: Dr Paul Dawson of Clemson University in the US

NATURAL BRAIN BOOSTER

Soak up the view: being exposed to nature may improve your memory. Volunteers took a short-term memory test, then walked in a park for an hour. Afterwards, they took a similar test and recalled 20 percent more. Researchers noticed comparable results when people viewed photographs of a natural setting, but not after they walked on city streets. Nature captures our attention without requiring much thought, so the brain can rest, says study co-author Dr Marc Berman.



GALLO IMAGES/GETTYIMAGES.COM (TOP)

Head Off Headaches

If stalled traffic and tight deadlines make your head throb, you may suffer from tension headaches. "Headaches have become an ordinary occurrence for most women and many of them feel helpless when dealing with this problem," says South Africa's migraine research pioneer Dr Elliot Shevel. Since stress is their most common cause, those pounders can be eased with relaxation. Try one of these tricks to nip them in the bud:

DEEP RHYTHMIC BREATHING

Shallow breaths cause CO₂ levels in your body to rise. This dilates the blood vessels in your head, which can cause pain.

Do this Count to five as you inhale through your nose, then count to five as you exhale through your mouth. Repeat 10 times.

CREATIVE VISUALISATION

Yes, it's a cliché, but thinking of a "happy place" can halt the release of stress hormones.

Do this Focus on combining deep rhythmic breathing with thoughts of yourself relaxing in a soothing environment such as a beach or forest.

PROGRESSIVE RELAXATION

Tension in your shoulder, neck and back muscles can cause pain to radiate into your head.

Do this Working up from your feet, contract each major muscle group one at a time. Inhale, hold for eight seconds, then exhale and release.

"If problems persist, it's imperative that you get an accurate diagnosis," adds Shevel. **The longer the headache persists, the more damage is done.** There are a number of treatment options and a permanent resolution of pain is possible in most cases. Go to www.WomensHealthSA.co.za/Health for more info.