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Obese people risk toxin vulnerability

United Press International
BOSTON — In addition to the health problems fat people already face, nutrition experts say the obese may now have to worry about extra high levels of toxic chemicals being stored in their bodies.

Chemicals such as DDT, the potent insecticide banned by the U.S. government, and PCB, a cancer-causing chemical once used to make electrical equipment, are stored in the fat cells of the body. These chemicals do not dissolve in water, only in fat.

Obese people can store larger amounts of toxic chemicals in their bodies. The problem is compounded by fat people eating larger amounts of food, which means they eat more toxic waste.

"The greater the amount of fat tissue in the body, the greater the potential for these toxins to collect and persist in the system for long periods of time," Dr. George Blackburn, a nutrition expert at Harvard Medical School, said.

When thinner people eat more toxic chemicals, their bodies tend to reach a saturation point after which they begin excreting fat-soluble toxic chemicals as quickly as they are eaten.

DDT has been shown to lead to infertility. When large amounts of DDT become concentrated in the liver, which stimulates the operation of enzymes, an individual's susceptibility to other toxins increases.

PCBs can also decrease resistance to disease and interfere with reproduction.

Blackburn warns in an article in *Rx Weight Control* magazine against starting a crash diet. Losing large amounts of weight quickly may increase the percentage of toxic chemicals in a person's body and circulat-

ing freely in their blood, Blackburn said.

In one case a person became seriously ill when large amounts of DDT were released into his bloodstream after he quickly lost weight.

In addition, by eating low-calorie foods such as some types of fish, people may be increasing the amounts of toxic waste they are exposed to.

Blackburn suggests that people who weigh 30 or more pounds over weight should begin slow diets that are approved by their doctors and seek to bring a person slowly back to their ideal weight.

When using fish as part of a diet, Blackburn suggests that people stay away from fish high in fat, such as tuna, swordfish and bluefish. He also suggested that people eat more low-fat fish such as flounder, halibut and cod. Fish that has been inspected by the FDA is safer than fish bought directly from fishermen because it has been checked for high levels of toxic waste.

When eating fish it is also advisable to strip off their skin.

"Since most of the fat in fish is found in a layer just below the skin, removing the skin removes most of the fat-soluble toxins," according to the article, co-written by Margaret Clay, a community health expert.

It is also more healthy to broil or roast fish and meat rather than frying, because not only do broiling and roasting help remove excess calories, they also remove stores of potentially hazardous chemicals. Fats and vegetables should also be washed to help remove chemical residues.

"Rather than bemoaning the fact that our environment isn't as safe as it used to be, we can take positive action to safeguard ourselves against unnecessary risk," the two researchers said.

Ants invade National Geographic society

United Press International
The National Geographic Society's Explorers Hall in Washington has been invaded by ants — deliberately.

Colonies of sugar ants and bulldog ants are on display in see-through cases at the society's scissors, dagger and hypodermic needle, according to a University of Florida zoologist.

"When the cell that contains the stinging mechanism is triggered, something like a pair of scissors explodes out," Frank Maturo said. "But it's sort of like the scissors are closed and then they open, making a gash. That gets an opening and this

is followed by a hollow tube that goes through that opening and injects toxin."

The poison causes extreme pain and can result in fainting, shock and, in rare cases, death.

Dr. Elizabeth Sheretz, a professor of dermatology at the university, said anything containing alcohol — rubbing alcohol, liquor or perfume — can deactivate the toxin.

"If there are signs of hives or extreme swelling or if the person has trouble breathing, he or she should be rushed to an emergency facility because people, especially children, can die from massive exposure to the toxic material," she said.

Trucks clean oil spill in San Jacinto River

United Press International

HOUSTON — Exxon employees used 10 vacuum trucks Wednesday to clean up 84,000 gallons of oil that leaked into the San Jacinto River when a 20-inch pipeline was hit by a vessel, a spokesman said.

Perry Smith said divers inspecting the pipeline Wednesday discovered 51 had been flattened.

"It is obvious the line was struck by something — a barge or a tug," Smith said.

The firm's oil traffic control sys-

tem detected a drop in pressure of the pipeline about 9 p.m. Tuesday and shut the flow in the line, Smith said. The line runs from northwest of Houston to Baytown.

Booms were placed around the river to contain it Tuesday night and the vacuum trucks were working all day Wednesday, he said.

Smith said cleaning up the oil spill should take five to seven days. The pipeline leak is located near where Interstate 10 crosses the river, about 20 miles east of Houston.

Farm union calls for chili pickers strike in West Texas

United Press International

EL PASO — Farm officials in West Texas and southern New Mexico said earlier this week that a strike by the El Paso-Juarez Farmworkers Union has not yet had an adverse effect on the harvesting of chili crops, but union officials say the strike will continue.

About 40 members of the union, following two days of meetings in Juarez, across the Rio Grande from El Paso, tried shortly after midnight Tuesday to discourage farmworkers from boarding buses headed for the chili fields of neighboring farms.

Police said the demonstrators carried hand-made signs demanding higher wages, better working conditions, travel and employment insurance.

The workers are paid between 36 cents and 50 cents per 10-gallon can of chiles, 90 cents for jalapenos with stems, \$1.30 per can for stemless jalapenos and between 40 and 50 cents per can of red chiles.

A Hatch New Mexico area contractor hardest hit of the farm labor contractors, said there were fewer

workers on his bus, but a Hatch grower, David Holguin, said the turnout in the fields was not unusually low.

Farmworkers begin to gather for work in the streets of El Paso about 6 a.m., when buses sent by farmworker contractors arrive to offer day's employment.

Included among the workers are Mexican-Americans, Mexican nationals residing legally in the United States and illegal aliens.

At the end of the day the farmers pay the workers in cash on the basis of amount of chili or other product picked. The workers have few, if any, fringe benefits.

One farmworker, 47-year-old Jesus Lopez of El Paso, said he could not afford to strike because he needs the money and the farmworker union offers no strike relief.

Esteban Posada, president of the Union of Border Farmworkers, said the strike will continue until workers' demands are met.

A farm leader said recent heavy rains have all but ruined the chili crop in El Paso and the Mesilla Valley of Las Cruces.

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