

HEALTHZONE

MEDICAL NOTES

Toxins that could be a trigger for MS

RESEARCH in mice and small studies in humans suggest that a toxin produced by the bacterium *C. perfringens* could be a trigger for multiple sclerosis.

Researchers in the USA have shown that epsilon toxin, produced by the foodborne bacterium *Clostridium perfringens*, can make the blood brain barrier more leaky in mice and also kill oligodendrocytes, the cells that make the myelin coating of nerves.

Permeability of the blood brain barrier and demyelination are both believed to be part of the disease process in MS.

Last year the same group showed that *C. perfringens* was present in a woman with MS who was experiencing a flare up of her symptoms. They also found people with MS were 10 times more likely to test positive for the epsilon toxin produced by *C. perfringens* than healthy controls. A positive result was seen in cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) as well as blood serum.

The causes of MS are thought to be a combination of genetic and environmental.

Why we love this paper

All Together NOW! is great – really uplifting and inspiring. It makes you realise what you can achieve if you put your mind to it. *Michael Wells, Bute Close, Hinckley, Leics*



JUST read All Together NOW! at the hospital. A fantastic, inclusive and educational read. *Melanie Hayes, 36, Chequers Road, Chorlton, Manchester*

Help with clothes

THOUSANDS of cancer patients got vital help to pay for clothes, fuel and travel to hospital, thanks to a UK charity.

More than £9.6 million in personal assistance grants was handed out to 32,500 cancer patients last year by the Macmillan Cancer Support charity.

Across the UK more patients were helped with clothing than any other cost arising from having cancer, followed by fuel and travel to hospital for treatment.

Dr Fran Woodard, from Macmillan Cancer Support, said: "Our figures are evidence of the financial isolation that can impact people living with cancer.

"To feel unable to buy the clothes you need to keep warm, for example, is an unacceptable reality for thousands of vulnerable cancer patients at a time when, on average, their income halves and their outgoings rocket."

■ Freephone 0808 808 0000.

Spreading the word

THE world's largest conference on infectious diseases takes place in Barcelona in May (10-13) with more than 10,000 experts expected to attend.

The annual European Congress of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases offers state-of-the-art updates in everything related to infections, their causes and treatments.

Fruit juice 'just as bad as a can of cola'

FRUIT juice is potentially just as bad for you as drinking sugar-sweetened drinks because of its high sugar content, two medical researchers have warned.

Better labelling of fruit juice containers to make clear to consumers that they should drink no more than 150ml a day, has been called for by Professor Naveed Sattar and Dr Jason Gill

They also recommend a change to the UK Government's current "five-a-day" guidelines, saying these five fruit and vegetable servings should no longer include a portion of fruit juice.

Inclusion of fruit juice as a fruit equivalent is "probably counter-productive" because it "fuels the perception that drinking fruit juice is good for health, and thus need not be subject to the limits that many individuals impose on themselves for consumption of less healthy foods".

Professor Sattar said: "Fruit juice has a similar energy density and sugar content to other sugary drinks, for example: 250ml of apple juice typically contains 110 kcal and 26g

of sugar; and 250ml of cola typically contains 105kcal and 26.5g of sugar.

"Additionally, by contrast with the evidence for solid fruit intake, for which high consumption is generally associated with reduced or neutral risk of diabetes, current evidence suggests high fruit juice intake is associated with increased risk of diabetes."

One glass of fruit juice contains substantially more sugar than one piece of fruit; in addition, much of the goodness in fruit - fibre, for example - is not found in fruit juice, or is there in far smaller amounts, said Professor Sattar.

Although fruit juices contain vitamins and minerals, whereas sugar-sweetened drinks do not, Dr Gill argues that the micronutrient content of fruit juices "might not be sufficient



to offset the adverse metabolic consequences of excessive fruit juice consumption".

While there have been calls in the USA to eliminate all fruit-juice consumption by children, the researchers stop short of recommending similar moves in the UK.

They also feel a fruit juice tax would not be warranted. However, Professor Sattar argues: "In the broader context of public health policy, it is important that debate about sugar-sweetened beverage reduction should include fruit juice.

"We have known for years about the dangers of excess saturated fat intake, an observation which led the food industry to replace unhealthy fats with presumed 'healthier' sugars in many food products.

"Helping individuals cut not only their excessive fat intake, but also refined sugar intake, could have major health benefits including lessening obesity and heart attacks."

The two medics, from the University of Glasgow's Institute of Cardiovascular and Medical Sciences, were writing in The Lancet Diabetes and Endocrinology journal.

Get stuck in!

TOP flight football has come a long way from the days when players tucked into steak and chips before a match.

But could the stars of today stay fit and strong enough for the rigours of the Premier League on a 100% vegan diet?

Ex-Everton FC player Neil Robinson is certain they can - and aims to show how in his upcoming UK tour.

Neil was born in Liverpool and holds the record of being the player born closest to Everton's home stadium Goodison Park.

He became a vegetarian at age 13 for ethical reasons, and four years later signed for his beloved Everton. After moving to Swansea City in 1980, Neil extended his moral stance over animals by becoming vegan.

He retired from professional football in 1990 after being either vegetarian or vegan for his entire professional playing career.

As one of the fittest at all his clubs, Neil was the first player to demonstrate that a vegan diet could actually be an aid to performing at the top level.

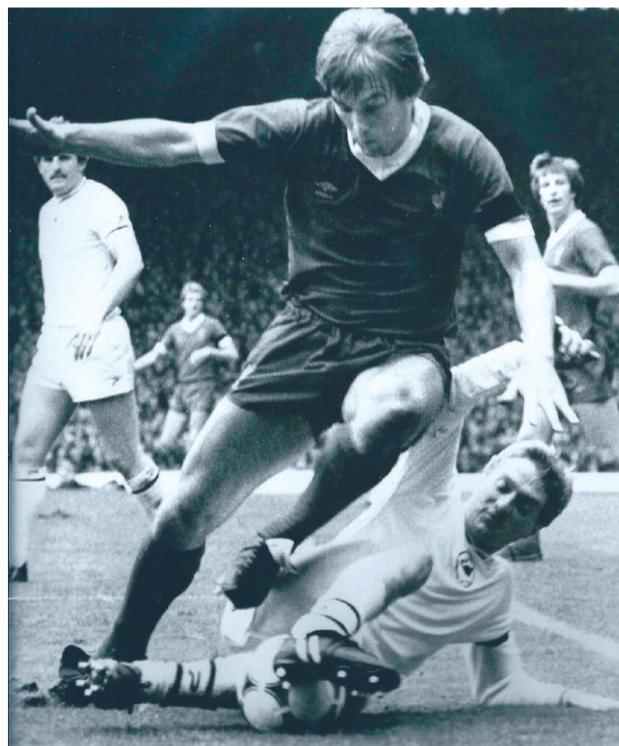
Today Neil is still passionate about his vegan lifestyle and over the past year he's been promoting a vegan plant-exclusive lifestyle alongside an aerobic fitness and high-rep weight training programme which he believes can benefit everyone.

He has also been doing live demonstrations of his favourite smoothies which are not only nutrient-dense but also very tasty.

Thanks to sponsorship from VegfestUK - organisers of some of Europe's biggest vegan festivals - Neil will be touring the UK in 2014 to share his insights on fitness and health.

A spokesman for the VegfestUK organisers said: "We're absolutely thrilled to invite such a vegan role model as Neil Robinson to speak at so many events this year.

"Neil's interesting background is very easy to



Ex-footy star says vegan diet best

FULL-BLOODED: Neil, right, and, above, showing there's nothing timid about vegans

relate to for a lot of people who wish to be physically strong and highly achieve on a sporting level.

"Many realise the benefits of eating more plant-based foods and less animal-based foods but are not doing that largely because of resistance to lifestyle change and also cultural beliefs, and one common myth is that athletes require plenty of steak and whey protein to stay at the top level.

"By playing top-flight football on a vegan diet, Neil's made a mockery of these beliefs. His highly accessible talks and smoothie demos will show that it is in fact very

achievable to stay fit on a meat-and-dairy-free lifestyle."

Neil's tour includes the following venues:

■ April 12: LABL Fair Liverpool, St George's Hall, Liverpool.

■ May 10: Great Yorkshire Vegan Fest, The Queens Hotel, Leeds.

■ June 7: North West Vegan Festival, Lancaster Town Hall.

■ Sep 13: Northern Vegan Festival, Empress Ballrooms, Winter Gardens, Blackpool.

■ Oct 25: West Midlands Vegan Festival, The Wolves Civic, Wolverhampton.

■ neilrobinsonvegan.com

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