

healthfile

Young bellies learn the shimmies and the shakes of belly dancing

by CHRIS ZDEB

Southam Newspapers

EDMONTON - Younger bellies are learning the shimmies and the shakes of belly dancing.

Girls as young as seven are enrolled in two ground-breaking summer camps at Edmonton's City Arts Centre this week.

The general consensus after the first day of 90-minute classes was belly dancing is fun, but it can give you a bellyache.

"I never realized how much it hurts," says 16-year-old Brianna Mills, rubbing her hands over sore tummy muscles.

"It's hard work," agrees Amy Procter, 17. "But it's more fun than I thought it would be."

Some people think belly dancing subjugates women, thanks to the seductive moves, the filmy dance costumes, and old Hollywood movies where midriff-baring femme fatales danced at the clap of a sultan's hands.

Nancy Bromley is teaching it as a form of empowerment. She wants the dancing to ground the

girls' self-image just like their feet tie them to Mother Earth as they dance.

Many girls and young women suffer from a frail body image because they don't measure up to the impossible standards set by models and movie stars, says Teressa Johnson, the Centre's program manager.

It inspired her to add belly dancing to their summer programs.

She opened a second camp for seven-to-11-year olds "because sometimes we undervalue or underestimate what girls this age are capable of, or interested in."

Patti Paterson signed up daughters Nicole, 7 1/2, and Sydney, 10, after hearing a girlfriend talk about it being a cool way for girls to learn about their bodies.

"I'm thinking if they are aware of their bodies, that's a good thing," Paterson says. "That it's okay to be whoever you are and do whatever. My kids are also on the shy side so I want to bring them out a little bit and this will be a good thing for

them."

Nancy Olthuis, the retired "godmother" of belly dancing in Edmonton, says she understands why mothers would want their daughters to learn belly dancing. "We want to pass on to our daughters an understanding of feeling good about who you are. Dance connects your mind and body and spirit and mothers want their daughters to be whole. It's a holistic approach to your development as a person."

Belly dancing doesn't require what society considers a perfect body.

Unlike ballet, belly dancing doesn't require a perfect form, or perfect feet or anorexia, Brianna Mills says. "Anytime you learn to do something new, that makes you feel very feminine. It helps you to take control of yourself, to feel good about yourself."

It has been 10 years since Tascheleia Marangoni was 16 and in high school, but the ethnic dance artist and teacher can rattle off an impressive inventory of teen angst.

"You're going through puberty so your skin isn't great. Your hair is kind of greasy. You don't know how to dress, how to act. Every time you see a boy, you get extremely nervous and shaky. You're worried about where you sit in class, what you say in class. You worry about everything."

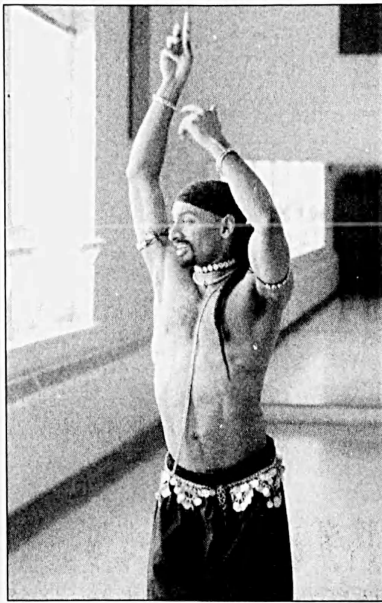
"And because you feel like you're always being judged on all of those things, it's very easy for a teenage girl to have low self-esteem," Marangoni says.

Not a lot of people do belly dancing, "so when a girl tells her friends she's belly dancing, they think it's cool and very exciting and something different" and it makes her feel good about herself.

Of course, belly dancing's exotic, sensual side also has teen appeal. It's an image a lot of girls would like to project, says Mills, who saw a woman dance "to rave reviews" during a class trip to Greece. But people who think the girls are studying the dance just to be sexy have a very superficial understanding. "It's good exercise, it's fun, it's something most people don't do and it's a little edgy."

Some parents think it's inappropriate for their children because they consider the dance somewhat racy.

"We're still having to work very hard to have the dance itself recognized as an art form," says Marangoni, who eschews the term belly-dance for the more correct Middle Eastern or Oriental dance.



Southam photo

Male belly dancer Viraj Wanigasekera receives a mixed reaction from women dancers who don't know him but is loved by audiences.

Children under 12 are interested in belly-dancing, but it's the shiny costumes that attract them, she says. "They don't understand what it's all about."

Still, she's interested in what impact the classes at the City Arts Centre being taught by Bromley, one of her former students, will have on the popularity of belly dancing.

Historically, it has undulated like the moves of the dance, she says. It was last hot about 25 years ago.

"It's like kick boxing or kung fu - it comes and it goes," she says. Belly dancing is at a high point right now but she expects it will fizzle out again in a few years, only to be rediscovered by another generation of young women.



Southam photo

Nancy Bromley instructs students, from left, Elewyn Epp, Connie Sobsey, Amy Procter and Brianna Mills at belly-dance camp.

No link between over-the-counter painkillers, and kidney failure: study

CHICAGO (AP) — Moderate use of over-the-counter pain relievers such as ASA, acetaminophen and ibuprofen does not appear to cause kidney failure in healthy men, one of the biggest studies yet to examine the issue suggests.

The study of 11,032 men was funded by the U.S. National Institutes of Health and the makers of Tylenol, an acetaminophen-based product.

The patients used up to 500 pills a year — a little more than one a day — for an average of 14 years, and no link was found even among those who used the most.

Three categories of pain relievers were studied: ASA, acetaminophen, and nonsteroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs) such as naprosyn, which is sold as Alleve, and ibuprofen, which is in Motrin and Advil.

Since 1980, at least eight studies have examined whether pain relievers are associated with various degrees of kidney failure. Two found no clear association, but the rest suggested there was a link, especially with Tylenol and other forms of acetaminophen.

The latest research was published in Wednesday's Journal of the American Medical Association.

"While more research is needed, we believe that these findings provide reassurance to clinicians and patients that moderate analgesic (painkiller) use is unlikely to contribute to increased risk of renal (kidney) dysfunction" in patients without kidney problems, aid the authors, led by Dr. Kathryn Rexrode of Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston.

The study does not address two important questions: whether similar results would be found in the sizable number of patients who take several painkillers daily and in women, who are disproportionately affected by conditions requiring pain medicine, such as arthritis and menstrual cramps, said Dr. William Henrich, a University of Maryland kidney specialist.

Kidney function was determined by two blood tests at the study's end. One measured levels of creatinine, a waste product normally cleared by the kidneys. The other measured how quickly and efficiently the kidneys were able to remove creatinine.

Study finds the chemical which is triggered by sudden exercise may cause a migraine hours later

WASHINGTON (AP) — For people who get migraine headaches, a burst of intense exercise can be a time bomb in the brain, setting off a migraine hours later, a study finds.

The fuse apparently is a chemical cascade released by the exercise, said researcher Joao Araujo e Sa of the Institute of Biomedical Research of Light and Image in Coimbra, Portugal.

He presented his findings in June at the International Headache Congress in New York City. It's a paradoxical result, because doctors commonly recommend exercise as a way to reduce the risk or severity of migraine.

"In our patients, we triggered that by exercise," Sa said. "We see exercise as probably a strong factor."

In Sa's study, 21 women with a history of migraine were compared to 12 who never got the headaches.

All were given an exercise test in which intensity is quickly ramped up to the point at which the participants can do no more.

These women reached their limits in 30 seconds. Of the women who never had a migraine, all remained migraine-free after the exercise test.

However, of the 21 with a history of

migraines, 11 had an attack. The migraines began 4 1/2 hours to 5 1/2 hours after the exercise, the study said.

The headache-prone women who didn't get a migraine after exercise might not have been working out hard enough, Sa said.

Their blood samples showed lower levels of lactic acid, a waste chemical created in muscle by hard exercise, he said.

What seemed to trigger the headache was a spike in nitric oxide, a chemical that has been implicated before in migraine.

After 30 minutes, nitric oxide levels in the migrainous women were more than double what they were at the start. Nitric oxide can dilate blood vessels.

And migraine researchers believe that the dilated vessels can put pressure on nerve cells next to them in the brain, causing the headache.

It's been known that exertion can trigger exercise, and the amount of exercise varies from person to person, said Dr. Judy Lane, medical director at the Head Pain Center of the Colorado Neurological Institute in Englewood. Usually, the headaches come after longer periods of exertion, she said.

Golf fitness experts say it's not too late to get tuned up for the sport

by APRIL CASTRO

DALLAS (AP) — Patients who undergo bypass surgery soon after a heart attack may have an increased risk of stroke — a finding that suggests there may be a price to pay for aggressively treating heart disease, researchers say.

Researchers involved in the study, called the largest of its kind, looked at more than 18,000 patients who had either mild heart attacks or a type of chest pain called unstable angina between 1995 and 1998.

People who had bypass surgery within two weeks of being hospitalized were twice as likely to have a stroke as those who had later bypasses. The early bypass patients were four times more likely to have a stroke than those who did not have surgery at all.

"Doctors may have a valid and important reasons for referring patients for bypass surgery," said Dr. Shamir Mehta, a cardiologist at McMaster University in Hamilton and a study co-author. "We all are adopting a more aggressive approach to the management of these patients, which I think is largely appropriate. Our study simply sends a gentle reminder to physicians that, in certain high-risk patients, there is an increased stroke risk after early bypass surgery."

During bypass surgery, surgeons take a blood vessel from another part of the body, such as the leg, and construct a detour around the blocked part of a heart artery. Stroke as a complication of bypass surgery is considered rare.

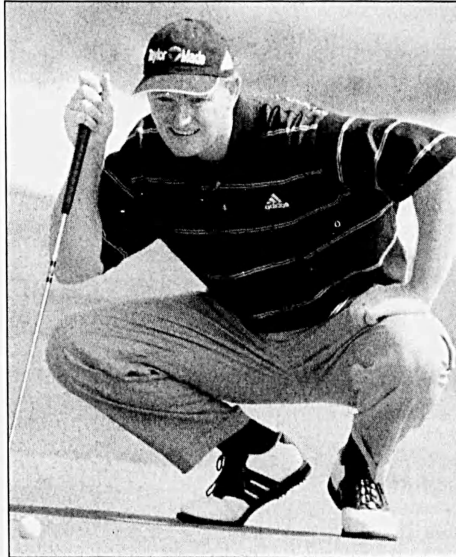
Only 238 of the patients, or 1.3 per cent, had strokes during a six-month follow-up. But 46 of them, about one-fifth, were fatal.

"There was a marked early increase in strokes during the first month after admission, followed by a lower rate of increase over the next five months," according to the study in Monday's Circulation, a journal of the American Heart Association.

The research did not find an increased stroke risk for patients who underwent procedures such as balloon angioplasty, in which a tiny balloon is used to unclog a blood vessel.

The patients who had strokes were older and more likely to have higher blood pressure, diabetes and other risk factors.

During bypass surgery, blood clots can form, circulation can be compromised and bleeding can happen. Such factors can contribute to the chance of stroke in heart patients, who already run a higher risk.



AP photo

Ernie Els the two-time U.S. Open champ says he only started getting on top of his game when he began to focus on getting fit with reasonable goals in mind.

Chronic sleep deprivation is making us clumsy

VANCOUVER - As a society, chronic sleep deprivation is making us clumsy, stupid and dead. That's Stan Coren's opinion of our blasé attitude to the subject.

Coren, a psychology professor at the University of B.C. and author of Sleep Thieves (1998), says sleep deprivation costs us billions of dollars in business and health care. It cuts into work productivity and creativity causing accidents, ill health and death.

It lowers our IQ, too. Typically, for every hour of sleep below eight hours a night, you lose one IQ point, and for every hour below seven hours, you lose two points, he claims. And it's cumulative. "For example, if you're cheating by two hours during the weekdays, that's 10 hours and 15 IQ points," Coren says.

The good news is, you can catch up on the sleep deficit on the week-end. Coren adds: "We actually need a hell of a lot more sleep than we think. Evolution programmed us to have nine to 10 hours."

Today, the average person sleeps seven to seven-and-a-

half hours. More specifically, evolution designed us to sleep in two bites, he says - about eight hours at night, then a shorter two hours or so in the afternoon. "It's still the pattern found in less-developed cultures."

We live under the curse of Thomas Edison, he says. "He gave us cheap electric light and part of the reason was darkness made us unproductive and waste time. He was an extremely jingoistic American and thought people were lazy and that the country would be more productive by getting rid of their excuse by providing light. He basically cost us 700 hours of sleep a year."

That loss translates into a huge health hazard. A 1992 U.S. study showed \$56 billion in direct costs was lost due to sleep-related accidents, more than 25,000 people die and 250,000 disabling injuries occur with lack of sleep as a causal factor.

"If we had a disease costing us that, we'd have every single health ministry shovelling money out of the back of a truck to solve the problem. We don't pay attention to sleep."