

Blood test may predict deadly heart trouble ahead

A new blood test for a protein called cardiac troponin T may be able to tell whether a seemingly healthy person is at risk of dying from heart disease, U.S. researchers say. The Elecsys Troponin T test by Roche is 10 times more sensitive to spotting the protein released by damaged heart muscle. Those with detectable levels are nearly seven times more likely to die of heart disease within six years. — REUTERS

Incense burning tied to asthma in some children

Children from homes where incense is regularly burned have a higher risk of developing asthma, according to a Taiwanese study suggesting that a particular genetic variation could also be involved. Incense has been used for millennia in many cultures' religious and spiritual ceremonies. In parts of Asia, people commonly burn incense in their homes — a practice that is becoming more popular in Western countries as well. — REUTERS

HOW TO REACT BEFORE OR AFTER THE FIRST SIGN OF INVASION

Fortify against flu

MARLENE LINTON
Special to QMI Agency

I've had one bout of cold and flu already, and I intend not to have another.

While it's not too late to have your flu shot, it's wise to have some sort of flu treatment plan ready as adults typically have two to four colds between September and May.

Windsor, Ont.,
naturopath

Sara Henderson has a number of recommendations for immune system boosters.

In addition to a daily multivitamin this winter, she recommends 2,000 IU a day of vitamin D and up to 1,000 mg of vitamin C daily to support the immune system.

Dr. Sara, as she's known to her clients, is a firm believer in probiotics and says that choosing a multi-strain probiotic formula can help, as she says, "to arm our immune soldiers to fight the bad guys. A big part of our immune system is in our gut and a probiotic will help to keep our guts healthy and strong."

When it comes to holiday interaction, simply washing hands once won't be good enough, says Dr. Tim Sly, a professor from Ryerson

The perfect flu-fighter tool kit

REXALL, a Canadian retail pharmacy network, has a checklist of items to manage the flu season:

- Use a new toothbrush after a cold or flu so as not to re-infect yourself.
- Take vitamins and Echi-

nacea to build up the immune system, drinking water for hydration and to help eliminate toxins from your body.

- Keep on hand fever-reducers, sore throat soothers, a vapourizing cold rub and a digital thermometer. — LINTON

University's School of Occupational and Public Health in Toronto. He suggests washing before digging into the appetizer tray at parties, making sure you don't mix up your wine glass with someone else's, and use serving pieces (not your fingers) at the buffet table.

Exercise can be an anti-cold prescription. A recent report in the *British Journal of Sports*

Medicine found that people who exercised at least five times per week were able to reduce the frequency and severity of colds. *Medical News Today* says it's because exercise triggers a temporary increase in the body's circulating immune system cells.

Dr. Sara also suggests adding two cloves of garlic a day to your menu as it's a "natural antibiotic."

Julia Benson toughens up to get into character



Sci-fi starlet Julia Benson has a perfect workout partner. Almost. He's always ready to exercise and he never complains during particularly grueling training sessions.

But he only does cardio.

He is, of course, a 31 1/2-year-old chocolate lab.

"He definitely keeps me active," the Winnipeg-born actress says in a phone interview from her Vancouver home.

"We run a lot, which is what I love doing the most for exercise. We'll go down and run at the beach (Spanish Banks). Or we'll do some hikes. There's tons of amazing trails around here."

Her cardio partner's name is Bauer. As in the company that makes hockey gear?

"Yeah, or Jack Bauer from 24," she

laughs. Most days, their outdoor treks last about 45 minutes.

Benson, a.k.a. Lt. Vanessa James on sci-fi TV show *Stargate Universe*, also likes to go in-line skating in the summer "when it's not raining in Vancouver."

But Bauer doesn't tag along. "He's not quite that trained," she

chuckles. Like most savvy fitness enthusiasts, the married 31-year-old brunette knows that variety is the spice of a good workout regimen.

"I like to switch things up," she notes.

That includes power yoga — a more vigorous form of yoga — twice weekly for 60-90 minutes each session, along with 25 minutes of weight training two times a week.

"I love lifting weights," says Benson, also known by her maiden name Julia Anderson.

"I'll work out with trainers. I've had a couple different trainers at different points in my life and I'll just do it for a few months. That way you learn different exercises and you can see what your body responds to and I'll take those exer-

cises with me in my regime."

Pumping iron has helped the five-foot-seven Benson maintain a toned body weight of 126 pounds.

"I find my body responds to weights really quickly," she notes. "Plus, my character is tougher on the show, so I want to make sure I try to bulk up."

Benson, who grew up as a dancer, adds that when she was first cast in *Stargate*, she took up kickboxing "to toughen up."

Filming for season two recently wrapped, and while she has some other upcoming projects to help her stay motivated to keep fit between seasons, Benson admits she goes through phases of being more and less active.

Yup, she's only human. "The key is to try and be as consistent as you can ... Sometimes you're not going to be able to get to the gym because work is too busy or you're too tired."

Benson says she doesn't beat herself up for the occasional dietary splurge.

For more, go to precisionnutrition.com. Cary Castagna is a certified personal trainer through Can-Fit-Pro.

Julia's health and fitness advice

1 Choose a physical activity you enjoy. There are so many different things you can do — just going for a hike, going for a walk, just getting out and doing something, getting some fresh air.

2 Maintain balance in your life. Don't punish yourself for occasionally eating dessert.

3 Realize the importance of health and fitness. When you're active, your quality of life goes up.

