

# Healthy Living

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## Alzheimer's Test Promising

A test for Alzheimer's scores nearly 90 percent for sensitivity and specificity, minimizing false positive and negative results, researchers in Canada say.

Dr. Robert Gundel, president and chief executive officer of Amorfix, said the only definitive diagnosis for Alzheimer's disease is a post-mortem examination of brain tissue to identify the presence of the aggregated beta amyloid protein in the form of plaques in the brain.

The Amorfix test is conducted on cerebrospinal fluid around and inside the brain and spinal cord obtained from living patients -- representing a significant step forward in early detection and subsequent treatment of the disease.

"Right now, diagnostic accuracy for Al-

zheimer's disease can be as low as 70 percent, meaning three out of 10 people who are diagnosed with this disease might not actually have Alzheimer's disease, but rather some other kind of dementia," Gundel said in a statement. "With our test, we've potentially reduced this percentage down to one out of 10 people."

The first application for the diagnostic test will be to screen patients more precisely for participation in clinical trials, which is expected to lead to improved results and reduce the time and cost associated with ongoing study of the disease, Gundel said.

"What this means is that we've moved one step closer toward commercialization of a highly accurate diagnostic test for Alzheimer's disease," he said.

## Zinc Important for Learning and Memory

Zinc plays a critical role in regulating how neurons communicate with one another, affecting memories and learning, U.S. and Canadian researchers say.

Study authors Xiaon-an Zhang, now a chemistry professor at the University of Toronto, Scarborough, and colleagues at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Duke University in North Carolina, said researchers have been trying to crack the 50-year-old mystery of what role the mineral has on the brain.

Fifty years ago, scientists found high concentrations of zinc in synaptic vesicles -- a portion of the neuron that stores neurotransmitters. But it was hard to determine just what zinc's function was, the researchers said.

In the study, the researchers designed a

chemical ZX1 that would bind with zinc rapidly after it was released from the vesicles but before it could complete its journey across the synapse.

Using the chemical, the researchers were able to observe how neurons behaved when deprived of zinc, Zhang said.

"As a chemist, I'm proud that I can make a contribution to neuroscience," Zhang said in a statement.

The researchers studied neurons in the brain region hippocampus, which is associated with learning and memory formation.

The study found removing zinc interfered with a process called long-term potentiation, which strengthens the connection between two neurons, and seems to be important for memory and learning.

## Pale People May Need More Vitamin D

People with very pale skin, who need to avoid sunburn, may not get enough vitamin D from sunlight and may need to take supplements, researchers in Britain say.

Lead author Julia Newton-Bishop of the Cancer Research U.K. Centre at the University of Leeds also suggested melanoma patients might also need vitamin D supplements as well.

The study, published in Cancer Causes and Control, defined the optimal amount of vitamin D required by the body as at least 60 nanomoles per liter. However, there is no current universally agreed standard definition of an optimal level of vitamin D, Newton-Bishop said.

Researchers chose 60nmol/L as the op-

timal vitamin D level in part because there is evidence that levels lower than this may be linked to greater risk of heart disease and poorer survival from breast cancer, Newton-Bishop said.

"Fair-skinned individuals who burn easily are not able to make enough vitamin D from sunlight and so may need to take vitamin D supplements," Newton-Bishop said in a statement. "This should be considered for fair-skinned people living in a mild climate like Britain and melanoma patients in particular."

The researchers took the vitamin D levels of some 1,200 people and found that about 730 people had a sub-optimal level and those with fair-skin had significantly lower levels.

## Food safety precautions advised

In light of the 18 deaths due to the food-borne pathogen listeria, U.S. health officials are advising consumers always to take precautions with raw produce.

The Web site FoodSafety.gov advises consumers only purchase produce not bruised or damaged, and when selecting fresh-cut produce choose items that are refrigerated or surrounded by ice.

Bag fresh fruit and vegetables separately from meat, poultry and seafood products to prevent cross contamination from meat juices, health officials said.

-- Store perishable fresh fruits and vege-

tables such as strawberries, lettuce, herbs and mushrooms in a clean refrigerator at a temperature of 40 degrees F or below.

-- Refrigerate all produce purchased pre-cut or peeled.

-- Wash hands for 20 seconds with warm water and soap before and after preparing produce.

-- All produce should be thoroughly washed in warm water.

When it comes especially to melons, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advises:

-- Any bacteria on the outside of the fruit

## Community News

### BROOKLYN COUNCILMEMBERS TO CO-NAME 13th AVENUE FOR RAOUL WALLENBERG

BROOKLYN – Councilman Brad Lander, Councilman David G. Greenfield, and Councilwoman Sara González are announcing legislation today that would rename the Boro Park portion of 13th Avenue after Raoul Wallenberg who saved thousands of lives during the Holocaust.

Wallenberg, a Swedish diplomat, traveled to Hungary during the summer of 1944.



the United States after the war, and many of them settled in Boro Park.

"Raoul Wallenberg's selfless actions during the Holocaust have had such an important impact on our lives," said Councilmember Lander. "If it weren't for him, many of our friends and neighbors in Boro Park might not be here today. It is therefore vital that we gather as a community and pay tribute to this legendary individual so our future generations will never forget him."

"Mr. Wallenberg's work has tremendous significance for my constituents," explained Councilman Greenfield. "If not for his sacrifice and his courage, thousands of them would not be here today."

"I am happy to join my colleagues in honoring a man who meant so much to so many," said Councilwoman González. "Mr. Wallenberg's actions saved thousands of lives and he deserves gratitude from the community and this great City. By co-naming this street we also maintain the memory of the sacrifices suffered during the Holocaust, which we must never forget," the Councilwoman concluded.

The co-naming will coincide with Wallenberg's 100th birthday next year. The Raoul Wallenberg Centennial Celebration Commission, spearheaded by the Friedlander Group, will be organizing the effort to honor Wallenberg's legacy. This street renaming will be one of many events during 2012 that will commemorate his achievements and heroism.

"It's all about building momentum" said Ezra Friedlander, CEO of the Friedlander Group and spokesman for the Commission. "As Jews, we have the most to be grateful for in regard to the heroism of Raoul Wallenberg and his life-saving actions. Indeed as 2012 approaches, we anticipate that it will be known as the 'Year of Wallenberg' and I commend leaders from both the local and federal level for taking this important issue to heart".

By that time, over 400,000 Jews had been deported to concentration camps. About 200,000 remained in the ghettos of Budapest, the city where Wallenberg set to work protecting as many Jewish residents as he could. Wallenberg rented 32 buildings throughout the city, declaring them extraterritorial under Swedish diplomatic authority.

Though the buildings were only suited for about 5,000 inhabitants, Wallenberg quickly issued Swedish passports to over 30,000 Hungarian Jews and moved them into the newly-established diplomatic posts, saving them from deportation to the concentration camps. Wallenberg was later detained by the Soviets and died in captivity shortly after the war.

Thousands of the people saved by Wallenberg during the Holocaust immigrated to

## 'Good' Cholesterol Reduces Heart Attacks

Raising high-density lipoproteins, known as "good" cholesterol, reduces heart attack and stroke risk in diabetes patients, U.S. researchers say.

Lead author Gregory Nichols, senior investigator with the Kaiser Permanente Center for Health Research in Portland, Ore., said heart attack and stroke risk increase when "good" cholesterol levels go down. Nichols and colleagues studied patients with diabetes because they are more prone to heart disease, with a lifetime risk as high as 87 percent.

While there is considerable evidence that reducing the amount of low-density lipoprotein, the "bad" cholesterol, can reduce the risk of heart disease, the relationship between HDL and heart disease is less clear, Nichols said.

The study involved 30,067 patients who

entered Kaiser Permanente diabetes registries in Oregon, Washington and Georgia from 2001 to 2006. The patients had at least two HDL measurements between six and 24 months apart.

Sixty-one percent had no significant change in HDL levels. In 22 percent of patients, HDL levels increased by at least 6.5 milligrams per deciliter of blood; in 17 percent of patients, HDL levels decreased by at least that same amount.

The study, published in The American Journal of Cardiology, found patients whose HDL levels increased had 8 percent fewer heart attacks and strokes than patients whose HDL levels remained the same, while patients whose HDL levels decreased had 11 percent more heart attacks and strokes.

The researchers tracked the patients for as much as eight years.

or vegetable can be pulled to the inside when a knife slices through.

-- After washing hands, scrub the surface of melons, with a clean produce brush or dish cloth and dry them with a clean cloth or paper towel before cutting.

-- Cut melon should be promptly eaten or refrigerated for no more than seven days.

-- Cut melons at room temperature for more than 4 hours should be thrown away.

-- Unlike some other bacteria, listeria can thrive in refrigerators and health officials suggest thoroughly cleaning any refrigerator drawers or shelves that might have held tainted food.