

# HEALTHY BODY/ HEALTHY MIND

## Study shows gulf vets gassed

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — Ailing veterans of a Seabee unit from Alabama say a study on Desert Storm diseases supports their claims that they were gassed in the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

"I know we were exposed," Jack Mitchell of Northport, a former master chief petty officer with the 24th Naval Reserve Construction Battalion, told The Birmingham News in story published Sunday. "It happened."

Mitchell's Seabee battalion, headquartered in Huntsville with members throughout the Southeast, was the focus of a medical study that confirmed the existence of a gulf war syndrome. Study results released Wednesday in Washington showed that 179

of 249 Seabee veterans reported they are now ill.

Researchers from the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center said many of the veterans were suffering from damage to their nervous systems caused by exposures to combinations of chemicals, including nerve agents, insecticides and anti-nerve gas pills given to 250,000 U.S. troops.

As a result, there are several forms of gulf war syndrome affecting veterans. Symptoms include rashes, diarrhea, achy joints, fatigue and memory loss. Three articles and an editorial on the study are being published in the Journal of the American Medical Association.

"I agree with the study," said John Gonzales, a Seabee veteran who had to be evacuated by air ambulance from the

gulf and has had health problems ever since. "I believe we got gassed."

Mitchell said many members of the battalion knew they were contaminated by chemical warfare agents shortly after the air war began on Jan. 17, 1991. Some veterans believe the gas was released by coalition bombing of Iraq's chemical arsenal, but others believe they were victims of an Iraqi attack.

No matter, Mitchell said, the gas was there.

"Animals were dropping dead," Mitchell said. "That was the thing that convinced me."

Mitchell said he saw black sheep choke to death for no apparent reason other than exposure to chemical or biological warfare agents.

Mitchell, 51, suffers from asthma and other health prob-

lems he believes were caused by the gulf war. He applied for disability benefits through the federal Department of Veterans Affairs two years ago.

"I haven't heard from them yet," he said.

Mitchell said he really doesn't need the money, but there are plenty of sick veterans who do.

Congress has loosened standards for granting disability compensation to gulf war veterans suffering from undiagnosed illnesses. But only a few hundred veterans have been granted the benefits, and the Clinton administration has vowed to break a bureaucratic bottleneck causing the problem.

Pentagon officials have repeatedly said there was no coverup of exposures to chemical warfare agents.

## New hope for leukemia patients

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PORTLAND, Ore. — Blood from her infant brother's umbilical cord could help save a 5-year-old girl suffering from leukemia.

In the first procedure of its type in Oregon, Amanda Ayala received about a cup of cord blood cells from her 7-week-old brother, Juan, Friday at University Hospital.

Umbilical cords, normally discarded after a baby is born, are proving useful in treating life-threatening cancers, immune system disorders and anemia.

"It's neat they can do this," said Laurie Vanover of Hood River, Amanda's mother. "I think more women should be saving cords for kids."

Several years ago, medical research revealed that cord blood contains the same disease-fighting cells as bone

marrow. Blood from the umbilical cord and placenta contains a rich population of stem cells — the cells that normally create several billion new red blood cells, white cells and platelets every hour.

Several hundred cord blood transplants have been performed worldwide, mainly in children.

Dr. Ted B. Moore, a pediatric oncologist, said such transplants usually are not available to adults because of the small volume of blood the cord yields.

Amanda was diagnosed with acute myelogenous leukemia in October 1995 and was treated with chemotherapy.

Although the cancer went into remission for a time, it returned and doctors determined her best chance was a bone marrow transplant. However, neither her parents

nor her two siblings were a compatible match.

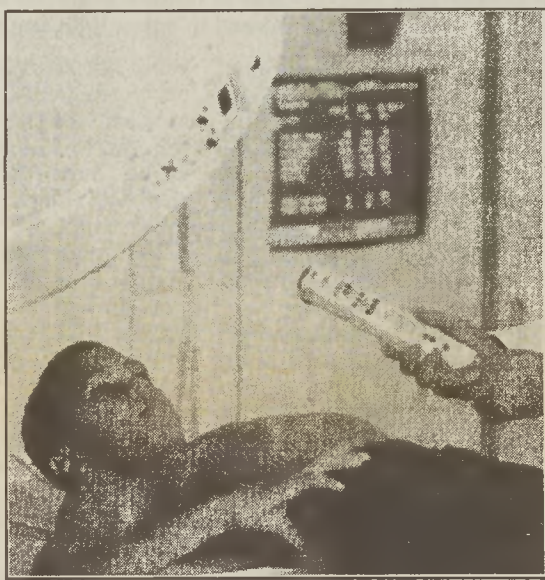
"It was great that at the end of November, she delivers, we have wonderful cooperation from her physician, and Amanda is fortunate that she has a sibling that matches," Moore said.

In preparation for Friday's transplant, Amanda had two days of chemotherapy and three days of total body irradiation to destroy her diseased bone marrow.

In Friday's 15-minute procedure,

Amanda received her brother's thawed cord blood cells, much as one would get a blood transfusion.

"The nice thing about this is, it means we didn't have to take the brother to the operating room," Moore said.



## Healthy Eating

SPECIAL TO THE POST

According to a recent nationwide survey, more Americans are resolving to take better care of themselves this year than last year. More than two-thirds (69 percent) are determined to eat more fruits and vegetables next year, up from 56 percent a year ago.

For those people, there may be no better way to usher in the new year than with the National Cancer Institute's (NCI) recommendation to eat "5 A Day." Eating five or more daily servings of fruits and vegetables can better your overall health and may reduce the risk of cancer.

Unlike many resolutions, 5 A Day is easy. NCI has developed 15 tips for eating 5 A Day this winter that can help Americans meet many of their resolutions because it is a great step toward maintaining a healthy diet and feeling more energetic.

With meals...

- Add 1/4 cup chopped dried fruit to a bowl of hot cereal. To plump up and soften the fruit, cook it with the cereal.

- Cook sliced apples and pears

and sprinkle with cinnamon. Serve warm, at room temperature or chilled.

- Add frozen mixed vegetables when you heat canned or pack aged soup.

- For a new sandwich twist, fill a pita or rolled tortilla with an assortment of chopped vegetables, along with sliced turkey, lean roast beef, tuna or cheese.

- Serve a vegetable platter with dip as a way to start a meal.

For snacks...

- Keep a stash of dried fruit in your briefcase, purse or locker. They make a great 5 A Day snack, and they don't spoil.

- Serve hot cider after skating or sledding.

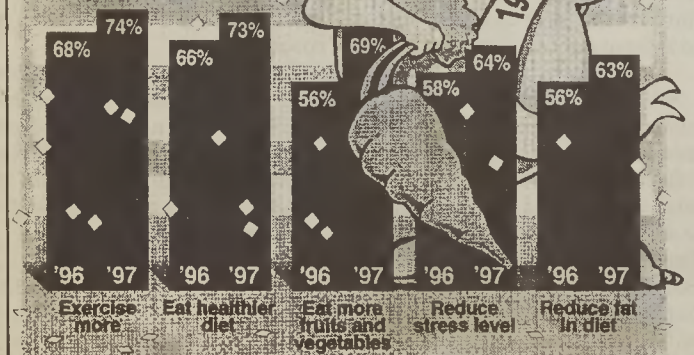
- Make your own trail mix with dried chopped fruits, raisins, breakfast cereal and pretzels.

- Have a glass of vegetable or tomato juice as a mid-morning snack.

- Bake a white or sweet potato in the microwave and eat as is or top with grated cheese, chopped broccoli, or another favorite topping.

### 1997 Resolutions

A recent survey shows more Americans want to take better care of themselves in '97, with the biggest jump among people vowing to eat more fruits and vegetables. The National Cancer Institute recommends eating five or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day for better health.



Source: National Cancer Institute

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**MEMORY LOSS IN AN OLDER ADULT?**

*"Mom isn't acting right; she seems confused."  
 "Dad is so forgetful. He keeps asking the same questions."*

Difficulty remembering things is often just a normal part of aging. However, a memory problem which gets progressively worse can be a sign of something more serious. Alzheimer's disease affects an estimated four million Americans, most of them elderly. It is characterized by impaired memory, thinking and behavior, and currently there is no cure.

Physicians at Carolina Neurological Clinic are studying an investigational medication that may help people suffering from Alzheimer's disease. As part of this study a free research treatment program will be provided to qualified older adults. Participants will receive expert medical care and study medication at no cost.

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Alzheimer's Disease

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