

## HEALTH WATCH



### HEALTH FOCUS

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# Obesity: A Serious Health Problem

It is a serious health problem that is, pardon the expression, all around us. Being overweight or obese is one of this nation's most common health problems. An estimated 25 percent of Americans carry too much fat. It is so common that many of us fail to notice it, particularly in ourselves and in loved ones.

African Americans as a group have a greater proportion of overweight people than other American population groups. The National Center for Health Statistics reports that about 35 percent of African American men ages 35 to 64 are overweight, compared to about 28 percent of white men. Even more striking is that more than half of African American women in the same age group are

overweight, compared with about 30 percent of white women. The reasons for these differences are unclear, but socioeconomic, cultural and genetic factors are possible contributors.

Studies have shown that overweight people live shorter lives as a result of health problems that go beyond concerns for appearance. They are more likely to suffer from heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes and arthritis. Weight loss can reduce or eliminate these risks.

Why are some people more susceptible to becoming overweight?

Body fat is made up of calories eaten but not "used up" by the body through physical activity like aerobics. People become overweight when they eat more

calories than the body can burn.

The amount of energy your body needs depends on your metabolic rate and your level of physical activity. Although some people have a higher metabolism than others, the best way to avoid gaining too much weight is to balance calorie intake and exercise. If you maintain a sensible diet and exercise regimen, you can burn extra calories and increase your metabolism.

If you are less active and overweight, limit your intake of high-calorie foods, like pastries, and "fill up" on low-calorie foods like vegetables and fruits.

Before entering a weight-loss program, consult your doctor. Nutrition experts at Baylor College of Medicine

state that fad or "crash" diets often provide inadequate nutrition and can be harmful. In most cases, the weight is regained when resuming old eating habits. Also, choose an exercise program that matches your level of fitness. An inappropriately vigorous exercise program can be harmful.

You can successfully lose and maintain your ideal weight by eating well-balanced, low-calorie meals daily and performing modest exercises, such as walking. Such a strategy can become a life-long habit that will help you achieve your goal while making you feel better and live longer.

*(Dr. Wesson is an associate professor of medicine at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas.)*

# Microscopic Surgery Reattaches Limbs

BY RODRICK MURRAY  
Contributing Writer

Imagine a 250 piece puzzle the size of a playing card. The pieces range from the size of a dime to the size of a needle. In order to put this puzzle together you have to use special tools such as tweezers and a magnifying glass. With all these intricate pieces you would probably say it will take a lot of time to put this puzzle together. Is it worth it?

For Deena Jones, a Winston-Salem State University student, it was. Jones had her hand detached and reattached November 11, 1993.

She was working in the Fine Arts Building on an electrical cutting machine, when her sweater got caught in the machine, dragging her hand into the cutting blade severing her hand from her body. She was rushed to Baptist Hospital and under went surgery for 11 hours.

Thanks to microscopic surgery, Jones is on her way to recovering. Microscopic surgery is a type of

reconstructive surgery that uses high power microscopes, artificial material, and natural materials.

Dr. Colin Shearin, a plastic surgeon in Winston-Salem, has performed several microscopic surgeries and says that the average patient who has a limb reattached will only receive "50 percent of the movement back in that area."

The steps toward having a successful operation are: the time period between the time of detachment and the time of reattachment, how the detached limb is stored (it should be stored in a bag then put in a bag of ice), the place where the limb has been attached should be covered and something should be done to stop the flow of blood—so the patient won't bleed to death, after getting to the hospital the affected areas will be cleaned and studied to find out how much damage was done to the tissue.

A surgeon then has the task of reattaching the body part. First the doctor assembles the bone structures, by either using the bones that are repairable or using pins

and clamps, which are made of stainless steel or plastic. Then the surgeon repairs the blood vessels and veins. The doctor repairs what he can then replaces the badly damage parts with veins or vessels from other parts of the body in which he uses sutures (a thin hairlike material that is made by man to sew things back together) to mend them together. When he finishes with the circulatory system he moves to repair the muscles and tendons, again he uses sutures to mend them together. The final step in this surgery is mending the skin. The doctor uses as much of the good skin as he can, then uses skin from other parts of the body to make skin grafts.

The doctor knows almost right away if the surgery was a success or failure because of the amount of blood circulation going through the affected area.

After anywhere between 12 to 15 hours you have a finished puzzle. It is either a success or a failure. If it fails the surgeon has to find out where the problem is and do his/her best to solve it.

# Pre-medical Summer Program To be Held at Rice University

#### NEWS RELEASE

Minority college students and graduates considering careers as physicians may apply for the Honors Pre-Medical Academy, a six-week summer program held at Baylor College of Medicine and Rice University in Houston.

The national program, funded partially by a grant from The Robert Wood

Johnson Foundation, is designed to increase minority representation in medicine by enhancing the participants' competitiveness in the medical school application pool.

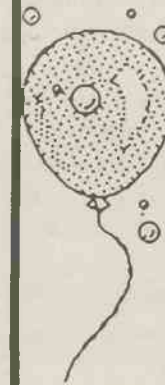
Admission is based on academic achievement and interest in medical careers. Participants must be African-American, Mexican-American, mainland

Puerto Rican or Native American.

Participants spend mornings in a medical setting paired with physicians and afternoons in science and communications classes at Rice.

College credit, housing and a stipend are provided. Application deadline is **March 1, 1994**. For more information, call (800) 633-6445 or (713) 798-4841.

Happy December  
Birthday Wishes



Takesha Patterson  
Kwame Brown  
Erica Avent

From Some Of  
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