

## Points of Interest

### Toxic Oil Spills Even Worse Than Once Understood

Researchers at the UC Davis Bodega Marine Laboratory discovered evidence of phototoxicity in the San Francisco Bay in the aftermath of a tanker spill in 2007. The phenomenon disintegrates small organisms exposed to crude oil and sunlight, affecting the food chain at a base level.

<http://www.physorg.com/news/2012-01-oil-toxic-previously-thought.html>

### Serious Complications from a Broken Heart

The stress from losing a loved one or an extreme scare can increase risk of heart failure up 23 times. An investigation at Harvard medical School revealed acute emotional stress as a key factor in accelerating heart problems in those already prone to them. Less sleep, low appetite and higher cortisol levels can also increase heart attack risks; these common are habits amongst those who are grieving.

*The Telegraph* January 9, 2012

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/healthnews/9002263/You-really-can-die-of-a-broken-heart-say-scientists.html>

### Autistic Kids Host a Different Type of Bacteria

Digestive problems have long been linked to autism, and researchers at Columbia University are closer to understanding why. They discovered micro-organisms living in autistic children that are not found in non-autistic children. Whether or not these differences are a cause or effect of autism remains to be seen.

Brent L. Williams et al. *mBio* January 10, 2012

<http://mbio.asm.org/content/3/1/e00261-11>

### Nicotine Alternatives Not So Helpful

A study published in the journal *Tobacco Control* shows that nicotine gum and skin patches do not help smoking cessation in the long term. The products may assist people in the early stages of quitting but have no effect when it comes to relapse. Heavy smokers are actually shown to be twice as likely to relapse after using these products.

Benedict Carey *The New York Times* January 9, 2012

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/10/health/study-finds-nicotine-gum-and-patches-dont-help-smokers-quit.html?ref=health>

### Hearing Loss a Risk for Most City Dwellers

Riding the subway and listening to MP3 players are just a couple of the reasons why city folk are losing their hearing. A recent study published by the journal *Environmental Science and Technology* showed that 90% of the 4,500 New York City residents sampled exceeded the recommended 70-decibel annual exposure limit.

Richard L. Neitzel et al. *Environmental Science and Technology* November 16, 2011  
<http://pubs.acs.org/doi/abs/10.1021/es2025406>

