

Medical Minute



MEDICAL BREAKTHROUGHS? MAYBE

Having acute appendicitis doesn't automatically mean surgery anymore. Patients with uncomplicated appendicitis were treated with antibiotics, and only 44% had their appendix removed over the next 10 years. Everybody got excited about that statistic. Me? I'm wondering about the other 56%. Are they walking around with a ticking time bomb in their abdomen? Did the appendix sign a peace treaty? And here's my thinking: surgery is harder to recover from when you're older. If that appendix is going to betray me eventually, let's just settle this now. Rip the Band-Aid off... and the appendix while you're at it.

Here's an interesting one: Abdominal Aortic Calcification, or AAC, can help predict your risk of dementia. The best part? They can spot it on a bone-density scan. One test, two answers, and it's cheaper than an X-ray or CT scan. Wait a minute... a medical test that gives us *more* information for *less* money? Somebody better keep that quiet before the insurance companies find out.

Researchers also found that drinking lots of sugary beverages—almost fifteen 8-ounce glasses a week—is associated with hair thinning, especially in men. So now soda is coming after your hair. First, it takes your teeth, then your waistline, and now your hairline. It's like its collecting trophies. The good news is a lot of guys look distinguished bald. Women? Not so much. Although judging by what hair salons charge these days, maybe bald is the affordable option. Or hats, definitely hats.

And finally, if you live at a high altitude, like Denver, the low-oxygen environment changes the way red blood cells use glucose, which may help explain why people living there are less likely to develop diabetes. They've even created a pill that mimics high altitude and reversed high blood sugar in mice. That's fantastic... if you're a mouse. The rest of us have two choices: move to Denver or evolve into a mouse.