

Brain changes scaled to diet

Dieting may affect the brain as well as the body, especially in women. English researchers found that a three-week weight-loss diet affected brain chemicals in the 12 men and nine women tested. The dieting appeared to modify the function of dopamine, a brain chemical involved in many nervous system activities in both men and women. In women, researchers also found changes in the levels of serotonin, a brain chemical linked to mood and appetite. The finding "may prove to have interesting implications for the vulnerability of women to eating disorders or depression itself," said Dr. Guy Goodwin of the Littlemore Hospital in Oxford. The findings may complicate studies of depression in which weight loss is a factor, Goodwin said.

Ecstasy causes agony. A drug known as MDMA or "ecstasy" has become popular among some college students. Users say it makes them feel happy, talkative and close to other people. A few psychiatrists use ecstasy to treat patients. "The drug eliminates anxiety and defenses," said Dr. Richard Ingrasci, a Massachusetts psychiatrist who has given ecstasy to 250 people. "People were able to achieve insight into their emotional makeup." But studies on rats and monkeys indicate that ecstasy damages brain cells, Science magazine reports. It's unknown if this damage is permanent, or if the drug causes similar damage to humans. However, several side effects are known. Ecstasy causes jaw clenching and teeth grinding during the high, and a hangover that may include drowsiness, depression, difficulty concentrating and sore jaw muscles.

Black Death grave. Scientists have unearthed a mass grave in London containing 1,500 victims of the Black Death. The plague killed more than a third of England's population in 1349. "The grave had all the classic signs of an epidemic that got out of hand," archeologist Peter Mills told Life magazine. Bodies were piled in trenches 6 feet wide, 6 feet deep and 100 yards long. Besides bones, only a belt buckle was found. Grave robbers probably stole any valuables. The grave was discovered in an area near the Tower of London slated for redevelopment. To learn more about public health during the middle ages, scientists will calculate the sex, age, height and disease history of 450 of the skeletons.

What is this? Leo Barish says this photograph he took looks like two wine jars laying in seaweed. But he knows it actually shows insect egg casings tangled in

