Health benefit of drug ‘ecstasy’ debated

Some researchers believe the psychedelic drug MDMA can help alleviate the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. However, recent studies have raised concerns about the drug's potential for addiction and adverse health effects.

SCIENCE DIGEST

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Transplant blues. - Between 15 percent and 20 percent of patients who receive bone marrow transplants suffer emotional distress and low self-esteem, according to a study at the University of California at Los Angeles. Dr. Donna Wolcott found that patients who have received transplants are more likely to experience emotional distress.

Energy machine. - It sounds too good to be true: a machine that produces more electricity than it consumes. Inventor Joseph Newman contends his “energy output” machine is revolutionary. But he can’t obtain a patent because the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office concluded in 1984 that it didn’t work. Now, a $75,000 study by the National Bureau of Standards has found that the machine consumes more energy than it produces. The results are clear and unequivocal, the bureau said. But in an interview with Science magazine, Newman said, “I have no respect for the National Bureau of Standards. This is a conspiracy against me.”

Hold the pepper. People prone to bloat should be wary of pepper. Researchers at the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston found that red and black peppers cause increased acid secretion in the stomach, and red peppers may aggravate the problem. The stomach reacts to pepper much the way it reacts to aspirin. Long-term use of aspirin can damage the stomach lining, but researchers aren’t certain whether pepper has a similar effect, said Dr. David Graham.

A rare night. Pray for clear skies Thursday night. Venus and Saturn will shine brightly, the moon will make a rare pass in front of the star Antares, and Mars will come closer to earth than since 1971. It will be a really great night for observing,” said Adler Planetarium associate astronomer James Seaver. “Venus is the right planet shining in the western sky for about two and a half months, and there will be a 17 moons visible with telescopes. The moon will pass in front of the bright star Antares at 11:05 p.m. And...