



In Brief

From the BI Staff

LONG-TERM MEMORY IMPROVES WITH CAFFEINE

Can a cup of coffee help you remember your grocery list? Researchers at Johns Hopkins University found that caffeine enhances memory consolidation for up to 24 hours after consumption. Memory consolidation is a neurological process that involves gradually converting information from short-term memory (stored for about 20 to 30 seconds) into long-term memory.

After viewing a series of pictures of indoor or outdoor items, study participants were given either 200 mg caffeine or placebo pills, with baseline saliva samples collected at one, three and 24 hours. Twenty-four hours after the study session, participants again viewed pictures of items they saw the previous day. The results: higher memory performance for those in the caffeine group.

ESTIMATING BABY'S SIZE GETS MORE PRECISE

A new method for determining birth weight thresholds will give physicians more precise information when making health care decisions about maternal and fetal health. Researchers at Michigan State University reviewed more than 7 million records from the National Center for Health Statistics to generate a reference that reflects the current sociodemographic composition of the United States.

Researchers applied a newly developed algorithm based on the birth weight compared against the last menstrual period of the mother and the estimated gestational age of the fetus to identify birth records that had likely errors in gestational age. This new method resulted in a change in birth weight thresholds, especially for preterm and post-term babies.

RISING BLOOD PRESSURE, DECLINING MEMORY

A recent study published in *Neurology*, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology, revealed that memory and thinking in old age can be impacted by high blood pressure in middle age. Researchers measured blood pressure in participants at an average age of 50 and again at an average age of 76. To examine the structure of small vessels in the brain, participants underwent MRIs followed by tests to measure memory and thinking ability. Researchers found that people with a history of high blood pressure in middle age and lower blood pressure in older age had smaller total brain and gray matter volumes, resulting in memory and thinking problems. Older people without a history of high blood pressure who currently have high blood pressure are 50 percent more likely to have severe brain lesions, compared to people with low blood pressure in old age.

FDA APPROVES FIRST DEVICE FOR RESTLESS LEG SYNDROME

A good night's sleep may soon be in sight for the estimated 12 million Americans who suffer from restless leg syndrome (RLS). Affecting both men and women primarily at night, RLS is a neurological disorder that causes discomfort, pain and sleep deprivation. The Relaxis™ device is the first prescription noninvasive, non-medication alternative for improving the quality of sleep of those with RLS.

Relaxis provides physical relief while allowing the patient to remain in bed. During an RLS episode, the user places the Relaxis pad at the site of their discomfort and selects vibration intensity. The device provides 30 minutes of vibratory counter-stimulation that gradually slows down and shuts off without waking the patient.