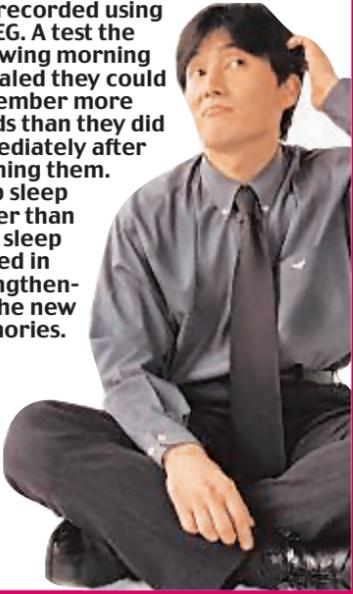


DO THIS *Sleep on it*

THIS one may help you feel good about that habit of oversleeping. According to a study done at the University of York and Harvard Medical School, sleep helps people remember a newly learned word and incorporate new vocabulary into their "mental dictionary." During the study, volunteers were taught new words in the evening and asked to sleep overnight in the lab while their brain activity was recorded using an EEG. A test the following morning revealed they could remember more words than they did immediately after learning them. Deep sleep rather than light sleep helped in strengthening the new memories.



Fat is linked to headaches

IT turns out that being overweight increases your propensity for headaches. Researchers at the Drexel University College of Medicine in Philadelphia found that obese people were more likely to report migraines or other severe headaches. Thirty-seven per cent of women with abdominal obesity as determined by waist circumference reported experiencing such headaches compared to 29 per cent of non-obese women. For men, 20 per cent with abdominal obesity reported migraines against 16 per cent without tummy fat.

GET A MAN TO EAT WITH YOU IF YOU ARE DIETING



HERE'S another strategy for women to stick to their diet plan: get hold of a man. During a study done at McMaster University, Canada, women eating in all-female groups chose food that was significantly higher in calories than women who ate in mixed-gender groups. Researchers believe this may be due to food marketing which depicts small food portions as attractive. Women conform to this idea, sometimes subconsciously, and eat small meals in order to be seen as more attractive. The study published in the journal *Appetite* showed men did not change their eating habits.

TICK TOCK of the male clock



By MANU MOUDGIL

TALK about marriage and guys in their 20s are most likely to turn a deaf ear. Working hard and partying harder seems to be the mission of the new age man, who feels that achieving his professional goals and enjoying his freedom comes before everything else. The ideal age to "settle down" and start a family is after 30. But new research shows that this may not be the best idea after all. Though there is plenty of research on the ticking biological clock of a female and how she is best off bearing kids before the age of 40, a lesser known fact is that the same holds true for men.

According to a study done at the University of California, men aged between 40-49 have almost twice as much fragmentation of sperm DNA than men in their 20s. The age of 23 to 25 is the best time for a man to become a father, as his sexual hormones are at their peak and the quality of his sperm is superior. The quality undergoes a drastic decline after a man turns 40 and the couple faces a higher risk of miscarriage, apart from problems with conception. "Besides pre-birth problems, the age of the father is also a risk factor in certain developmental disorders like autism and dwarfism," says Dr (Col) V K Wadia, consultant psychosexual medicine, Adiva Infertility Centre.

In a study published in the journal *Autism Research*, experts analysed around five million births in California during the 1990s and found that when the father was over 40 and the mother under 30, the chances of their offspring being autistic was 59 per cent greater than for younger men. For women aged 30 or more, the risk of autism rose 13 per cent when

the father was over 40.

A type of dwarfism called Achondroplasia is a very rare disorder which has been associated with ageing fathers. Researchers at California University found a 2 per cent increase in the frequency of the mutation that causes dwarfism for each year of increasing age in men. Those in their 40s are almost twice as likely as those in their 20s to produce sperm carrying the mutation, according to the study.

It is well known that high maternal age leads to increased risk of Down's syndrome in the baby but a study done at the New York-Presbyterian Hospital shows that the man is equally responsible for the abnormality. Published in the *Journal of Urology*, the study found that

Men who become fathers after the age of 40 put their offspring at risk of developing genetic disorders

men over age 40 had twice the chances of having a child with Down's syndrome than men less than 20 years old. The chances increase with both men and women above the age of 35.

SINCE older women tend to marry older men, there is an increase in the incidence of genetic abnormality in women above the age of 35, the result of a combination effect of maternal and paternal age rather than the result of maternal age only. This interaction can explain the dramatic increase in Down's syndrome that is seen in women older than 35," points out Dr Witty Raina, senior

gynaecologist, The Cradle.

Another study published in the *British Medical Journal* has shown that for each extra decade in a father's age at the time of his child's birth, the child is almost 50 per cent more likely to suffer from schizophrenia later in life. "The age of both men and women are crucial when it comes to health of the offspring. More and more people are marrying late which is bad for their offsprings," says Dr Raina.

Paternal age has also been linked to a rare genetic disease called Apert syndrome which leads to webbed fingers and early fusion of the skull bones which must be corrected by surgery. A study done at the Johns Hopkins University found that the risk of having a child with Apert is about six times higher for a man age 52 than for someone who's 27.

Unlike for women, genetic screening for men is not available. Sperm DNA fragmentation test is done in some countries but there are still varied opinions on its efficacy and it's not being done in India. This is why it's all the more important to have children at the right time if you are a man who goes gooey over kids. It is cool to be a "young dad" and just believe that you have innate capability and resilience at young age to accept the challenges and responsibility of parenthood as it comes.

manu.moudgil@
mailtoday.in

Dad influences his girl's health



FATHERS can expect some serious blame from their overweight daughters. A new study published in journal *Nature* suggests that men eating a fatty diet before the conception of their child can pass on their health habits to their female offspring. Healthy fathers, on the other hand, had correspondingly healthy daughters.