Singers to share opera, theater at tabernacle

By Steven Reinberg

Sunlight is known to lower blood pressure, but now a team of British researchers has figured out why.

What they found is that nitric oxide stored in the top layers of the skin reacts to sunlight and causes blood vessels to widen as the skin moves into the bloodstream. That, in turn, lowers blood pressure.

“This is an unexpected finding, in that the skin has not been considered to be involved in blood pressure regulation,” said Dr. Martin Pusey, a professor of experimental medicine at the University of Sheffield in England. “We think this could have important medical implications.”

But that isn’t the only benefit of sunlight — it might also help to reduce the risk for heart disease. “That’s where it gets interesting,” said Dr. Stephen Feelisch, a professor of cellular biochemistry at Imperial College London.

What they found is that sunlight can be a new risk factor for heart disease. “One of the main contributors to the disease is high blood pressure,” Feelisch said. The report was published Jan. 30 in the Journal of Investigative Dermatology.

More research

Dr. Gregg Fonseca, associate chief of the division of cardiology at the University of Washington School of Medicine, said blood pressure is a major risk factor for stroke and kidney disease, in addition to heart disease.

That blood pressure levels are higher during winter and further away from the equator is well known, but the reasons behind those observations have not been entirely clear.

Further studies are needed to determine the degree to which varying levels of blood pressure might play a role in regulating skin health.

“While higher blood pressure is a risk factor in those who are already ill, it may not necessarily be a major cause of disease,” Feelisch said.

Muppets to promote kids' overall health

By Marilyn Marchione

Dr. Ruster, center, is friends with Grover, Rosita, Elmo, Cookie Monster, Ernie and Bert on "Sesame Street." (AP)

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