Calcium may do more than build strong teeth. A Dartmouth Medicine study showing a possible protective effect against colon polyps was presented at a meeting of the American Association for Cancer Research.

Picking up parental habits

“Honey, have some smokes,” said a 6-year-old boy to a doll. The boy was one of 120 youngsters pretending to grocery shop as Dartmouth Medicine researchers observed. Led by Madeline Dalton, Ph.D., the team found that children were more likely to “buy” cigarettes if their parents smoked and to “buy” alcohol if their parents drank at least monthly. “Our study is the first to demonstrate that preschool children possess social cognitive scripts of adult social life in which the use of alcohol and tobacco play central roles,” Dalton et al. wrote in the Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine.

Reproductive immunity

Hundreds of scientific articles on the immune system of the female reproductive tract were recently summarized by five Dartmouth Medicine researchers in the departments of Physiology and of Microbiology and Immunology. The goal of the summary, published in Immunological Reviews, was “to define the immune system in the female reproductive tract and where possible, to define regulatory influences that occur during the menstrual cycle.” It is essential that the tract’s immune system be understood, the researchers concluded, for protection against microbial diseases.”

Tackling the mechanisms of head injuries

In hard-hitting sports like football, helmets don’t always protect players from mild traumatic brain injuries, a.k.a. concussions. “Concussions are a major area for concern,” Dartmouth’s head athletic trainer, Jeffrey Frechette, says. “For some years, Dartmouth football players were wearing HIT-equipped helmets. These helmets wearers were more likely to say that they were going to quit the sport when they had a concussion.”

Safer: “If more were understood about exactly how concussions are caused, then there might be better medical care for those with the brain injury,” Dartmouth’s psychiatrists says. “There might also be better safety equipment, better preventative measures, and safer techniques taught in sports.”

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“The idea is to see whether multiple sub-concussive impacts affect cognitive function,” says McAllister. “The system is an extra set of eyes to pick up a kid who we might otherwise have not known about,” says Frechette. “The data is the data that’s of most interest to the researchers,” says McAllister. “They will conduct neuropsychological assessments of the players with the HIT helmets—such as functional MRI scans and tests of their working memory—and will compare these findings to the HIT data. For example, they will compare the effects of one major impact to the cumulative effects of many smaller hits.”

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