

## Everything you wanted to know about ...but were too afraid to ask

By Marc Kerner, MD

**Have you ever had a cold or allergy attack that wouldn't go away?**

If so, there's a good chance you actually had sinusitis. We estimate that 37 million people are afflicted with sinusitis each year, making it one of the most common health conditions in America. That number may be significantly higher, since the symptoms of bacterial sinusitis often mimic those of colds or allergies, and many sufferers never see a doctor for proper

diagnosis and treatment with an antibiotic.

### WHEN IS A COLD ACTUALLY SINUSITIS?

The vast majority of sinus infections are caused by bacteria. It usually is preceded by a cold or an allergy attack, and can be made worse by exposure to environmental pollutants. Unlike a cold, or allergy, bacterial sinusitis

requires a physician's diagnosis and treatment with an antibiotic to cure the infection and prevent future complications.

Normally, mucus collecting in the sinuses drains into the nasal passages. When you have a cold or allergy attack, your sinuses become inflamed and are unable to drain. This can lead to congestion and repeated episodes of congestion lead to infection.

Diagnosis of acute sinusitis usually is based on a physical examination and a discussion of your symptoms. Your doctor also may use x-rays of your sinuses or obtain a sample of your nasal discharge to test for bacteria.

### WHEN ACUTE BECOMES CHRONIC SINUSITIS

When you have frequent sinus infections, or the infection lasts three months or more, you most likely suffer from chronic sinusitis.

Symptoms of chronic sinusitis may be less severe than those of acute sinusitis. However, untreated chronic sinusitis can cause damage to the sinuses and cheekbones that sometimes requires surgery to repair.

### TREATING SINUSITIS

Therapy for bacterial sinusitis should include an appropriate antibiotic. If you have three or more symptoms of sinusitis, be sure to see your doctor for diagnosis. In addition to an antibiotic, an oral or nasal spray or drop decongestant may be recommended to relieve congestion, although you should avoid prolonged use of nonprescription nasal sprays or drops. Inhaling steam or using saline nasal sprays or drops can help relieve sinus discomfort. The symptoms of sinus infections that become chronic include headaches or facial pain or pressure, nasal congestion, nasal drainage, ear fullness, cough, fevers, sneezing, dental pain, itchy eyes and sometimes fatigue.

It is important for patients to be evaluated by a Board Certified Specialist if you have these symptoms. The diagnosis can be made by looking into the nasal cavity with a small telescope and then with a special xray called a CT scan of the sinuses. Surgery should be considered only if medical treatment fails or if there is a nasal obstruction that cannot be corrected with medications.

## Healthy Happ

### Be Fit, Be Safe

Learn about fitness the body mechanics and pain management at this informative program. The event also includes free blood pressure testing, body composition testing, pulmonary function screening, grip strength testing, plus vision and hearing screenings. Thursday, June 24, 12 noon to 2 p.m. Westfield Shoppingtown Topanga, 660 Topanga Canyon Blvd., Canoga Park. (818) 594-8732

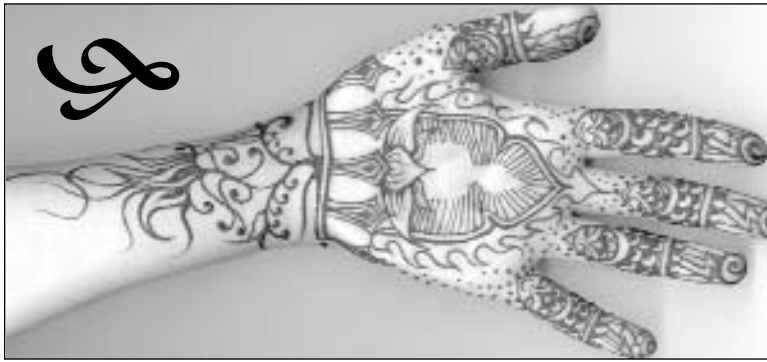
### Cholesterol Screening

The screening includes body fat analysis, vital signs and blood testing. Fasting is recommended. Appointments are necessary. Fridays, 8:30 a.m. Valley Presbyterian Hospital, Cardiac Rehab, 15107 Vanowen

rics/Gynecology (Maternal-Fetal) (Board Certified) and Anne Ralston, California Chiropractic Foundation. 8 p.m. Westfield Medical Center. (818) 676-4322

### Sleep Apnea

Learn about the importance of sleep for treatment, Spouses are dates of next Roscoe Canyon Northridge.



# Henna Tattoos

By Jessica Stepkin

For the last 5,000 years, women (and some men) have been decorating their bodies with henna art. Traditionally used to adorn the hands and feet with a finely ground paste made from the leaves of the henna plant, the act of this ceremonial decoration is called Mehndi.

One of the earliest documentations of henna comes from ancient Egypt where it was known to have been used to stain the toes and fingers of Pharaohs preceding mummification.

Historical evidence also supports origination in India during the 12th century, as well as the Middle East and North Africa during ancient times. But because of migration and cultural interaction, it makes it difficult to determine where certain traditions began. All these facts support the possibility that similar uses of henna appeared separately but at the same time, which accounts for the difficulty of pinpointing the exact origin of Mehndi art.

Aside from the now-trendy uses of Mehndi art as temporary tattoos, there are three main traditions that are recognizable. Middle Eastern (Arabic) Mehndi features large floral patterns on the hands and feet. While Indian (Asian) Mehndi uses lacy floral and paisley patterns with fine lines to adorn hands, feet, forearms and shins. African Mehndi uses large and bold geometrically patterned angles for design.

It is also a common custom to forgo the Mehndi and create a "henna shoe" by stepping into the paste in attempt to calm, protect and cool the skin.

into drink form to heal headaches and stomach pains. Some countries also believe henna holds magical powers. For example, in Morocco newly purchased homes' front doors are often painted with henna to ward off evil and to bring prosperity. Many religions use henna in their celebrations of weddings, betrothals, births, holidays and festivals.

In recent Western popular culture, Mehndi has been renewed. Many musicians and Hollywood personalities have adopted and altered the traditions so that Mehndi has become a fast-growing trend among men and women as an alternative to tattooing. Popular designs include the peacock—national bird of India, the lotus flower and an elephant with raised trunk, which symbolizes good luck.

When having Mehndi applied, there are general rules of thumb you must be aware of: Henna paste, at time of application, will always be khaki green, greenish brown, or very dark brownish green and will smell similar to spinach or essential oils (like Eucalyptus or Pine).

In order to get the most out of your designs, the paste must be kept on your body for as long as possible (over one hour at least - preferably overnight) before you scratch it off. The more time you keep the dried paste on, the longer the Mehndi will last and the darker it will be. The stain that the henna will leave is orange and will darken to red brown or dark brown. Most henna stains last anywhere from one to three weeks—with color fading to

## Seminar leads path to the fountain of youth

By Trana Shannon

You will age, but you can put it off." That's the message Dr. Michael Hirt is working to help the over-40 population understand, and the Harvard Medical School graduate knows just how to trick time.

"With our grandparents generation, they could look at their parents and see how they could expect to age," Dr. Hirt explains. "But now, we've learned so much that we no longer have to follow in the footsteps of those before us."

The board certified physician in both Internal Medicine and Nutrition contends that if you take the appropriate steps you can virtually alter your destiny.

"We know today that not only can we lower cholesterol, but we can keep arteries supple so that they are able to send blood to all of the right places, including memory cells," he said. "By keeping anti-oxidants in the blood high and cholesterol low, we can actually limit brain shrinkage that once was an inevitable part of growing older."

Dr. Hirt also emphasizes that hormones control everything from your sex drive, muscle

mass, hair growth, skin pigmentation and body odor, among many other functions. He insists that hormone balance is paramount to good health.

"You name it and there is a hormone that's of vital importance," he said. "Some people's hormones decline steadily, like a plane softly touching down at LAX. But others may experience a drop more comparable to parachuting out of an airplane. When you see a 50-year-old with hormone levels of a 90-year-old, there's little wonder why they are depressed. However, they don't need anti-depressants. What they need to do is get their hormones back in line and the rest will fall appropriately back into place."

The Los Angeles native contends that foods are a hot spot for aging. Alcohol and processed foods are the gas pedal for age acceleration. By learning how to combine carbohydrates and fats, Dr. Hirt believes you can put the brakes on the passage of time and optimize your chances of staying young in body and spirit.

"Early on I thought there had

when the paste comes off.

PPD dye can lead to skin infections. Typical symptoms begin between three and 13 days of application and can be in form of any of the following: blistering, itching, sloughing off of skin, open sores and scabbing. All of these irritations from PPD will take place in the shape of the design.

While PPD is obviously harmful, please note that there are some safe body art products used for Mehndi purposes, such as black body paints, but they typically will not last longer than three days.

Another thing to know is that in the United States of America, the Food and Drug Administration does not currently approve henna for use as body art, although it has unrestricted use for hair.

If you're contemplating Mehndi,