

A new federal report finds little evidence that Americans are getting serious about physical fitness. Only 24% reported getting recommended amounts of exercise in 1998. The figure for 1990: 23%.

SOURCE: CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

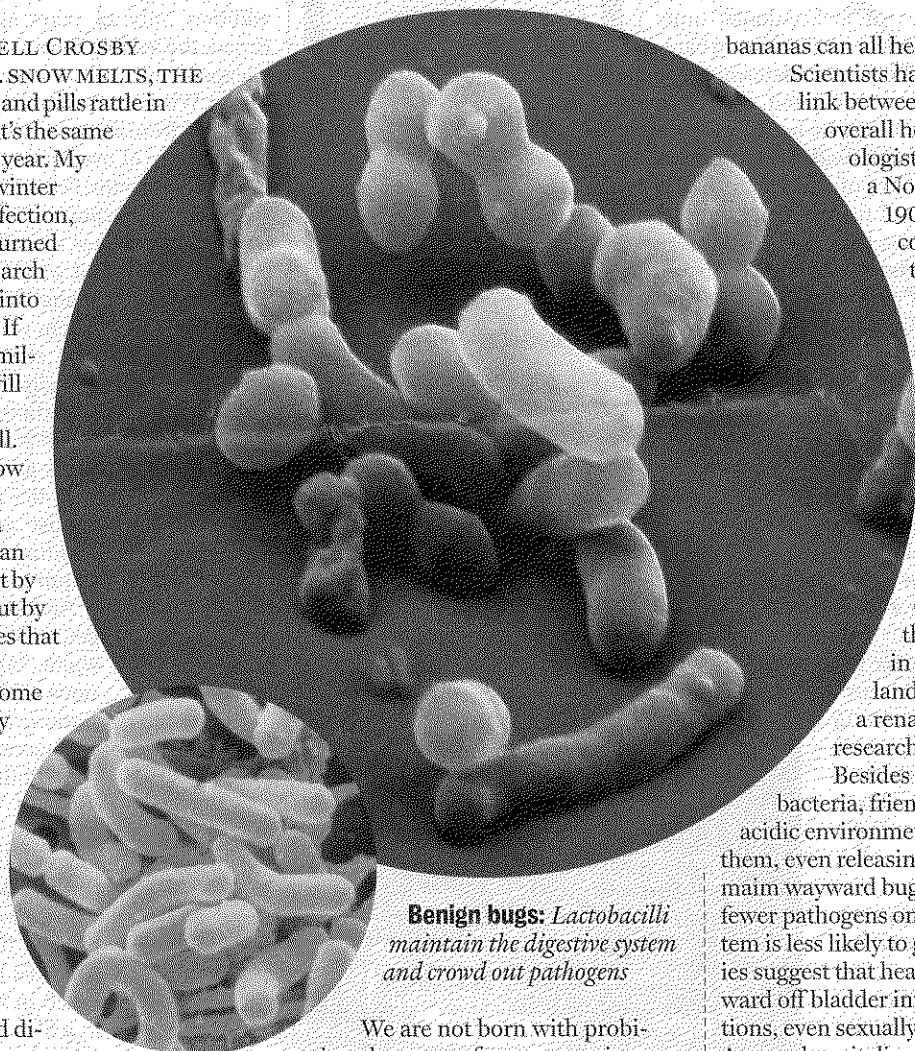
Friendly Infections

You've heard that there's 'good' cholesterol. Now, how about beneficial bacteria? Cultivating these microbes can have a wide range of health advantages.

BY MOLLY CALDWELL CROSBY

AH, SPRING. SNOW MELTS, THE wind gusts and pills rattle in my purse. It's the same story every year. My tenacious winter cold spawns a sinus infection, or my sore throat has turned to tonsillitis. By late March I've nettled my doctor into a round of antibiotics. If you're among the 150 million Americans who will get a prescription this year, you know the drill. What you may not know is that treating every minor infection with a round of amoxicillin can harm your health—not by breeding superbugs but by killing the friendly ones that live within you.

Our bodies house some 400 species of friendly bacteria, or "probiotics." They cling to the walls of our stomachs and intestines. In the age of germphobia, it's hard to imagine microbes as our allies. But mounting evidence suggests that these friendly flora aid digestion, ward off pathogens and help us process folic acid and other critical nutrients. When the complex balance of microbes is jilted by stress, alcohol, antibiotics or poor nutrition, the consequences can be most unpleasant—ranging from stomachaches to vaginal infections, vitamin deficiencies and chronic inflammation. Fortunately, a little fine-tuning can keep your system humming.



Benign bugs: *Lactobacilli* maintain the digestive system and crowd out pathogens

We are not born with probiotics; they come from our environment. Babies encounter their first friendly microbes in breast milk. Familiar sources include yogurt, buttermilk, fermented cheese, kefir (cultured milk) and miso (fermented soybeans). And because these microbes thrive on nondigested sugars called fructooligosaccharides ("prebiotics"), foods such as onions, asparagus, tomatoes, garlic, artichokes, honey and

bananas can all help the bacteria thrive. Scientists have long suspected a link between these microbes and overall health. Russian bacteriologist Elie Metchnikoff won a Nobel Prize in the early 1900s for linking yogurt consumption to longevity. But probiotics received little attention until the mid-1980s, when Drs. Sherwood Gorbach and Barry Goldin of Tufts University discovered lactobacillus, the bacteria used in the majority of today's research. Today, says microbiologist Gerald Tannock of the University of Otago in Dunedin, New Zealand, "we are experiencing a renaissance in [probiotics] research."

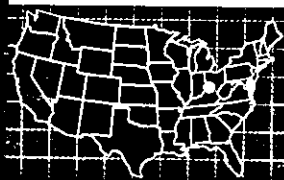
Besides crowding out harmful bacteria, friendly flora maintain the acidic environment needed to control them, even releasing hydrogen peroxide to maim wayward bugs. And when there are fewer pathogens on hand, the immune system is less likely to get overwhelmed. Studies suggest that healthy bacteria can help ward off bladder infections, vaginal infections, even sexually transmitted diseases. Among hospitalized infants, those given formula enriched with bifidobacteria (the bacteria found in breast milk) are less likely to develop infectious diarrhea. People who take lactobacillus supplements for two weeks before receiving a typhoid vaccine exhibit a stronger immune response. And researchers will soon report evidence that lactobacillus can lower the risk of respiratory infections in children.

my Chanel slingbacks," says Wilsey, laughing—to see the engine depot and signal box designed by the Basel firm of Herzog & deMeuron, then on the brink of fame for the not-yet-completed Tate Modern gallery in London. Parker and Wilsey were captivated by the structures, aglow in the night. "We really needed a compelling vision to raise money," recalls Parker. "Herzog & deMeuron had a light touch, an ethereal magical quality that seemed to work with the park." The \$135 million project, to open in 2005, will have 300,000 square feet of multileveled space, with a twisting tower and a shimmering exterior.

At the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the force behind rebuilding the museum isn't one of nature—it's one of pragmatism. When the British Malcolm Rogers arrived, it was, as The Boston Globe described it, a place of "locked doors, dimly lit galleries, indifferent visitor services, and a barely explained collection." Rogers was determined to rehab the museum from the inside out: in a series of highly controversial moves, he began by tossing out traditional curatorial fiefdoms, and created superdepartments ("Art of the Americas" is one), where paintings and furniture are lumped together. He's tried to lure the public with more populist shows—to the horror of some critics—such as an exhibition of guitars through history called "Dangerous Curves." The results: annual attendance doubled, to 1.4 million visitors, and endowment increased by \$50 million, to \$300 million total. Now for the outside. Rogers has engaged the illustrious English architect Lord Norman Foster—but not just to slap on another new wing. Foster is devising a master plan that will not only add new structures but reorder the museum's labyrinthlike circulation. It will take 10 to 15 years to realize—and cost what? "Haven't a clue," says Foster.

The Boston museum gets a running start with one of the country's great collections, but in other places, a stellar new building can help put a museum with more modest holdings on the map. In Ft. Worth, Texas, Tadao Ando is building the new Modern Art Museum—four elegantly austere pavilions, with bluish glass wrapping smooth-as-velvet poured-concrete walls. The project has a fairy godmother in trustee Ann Marion, scion of Texas's Four Sixes ranch, who almost single-handedly got the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum built in Santa Fe, N.M. It was Marion who called up the museum one

CONTEMPORARY ARTS CENTER



City: Cincinnati

Architect:

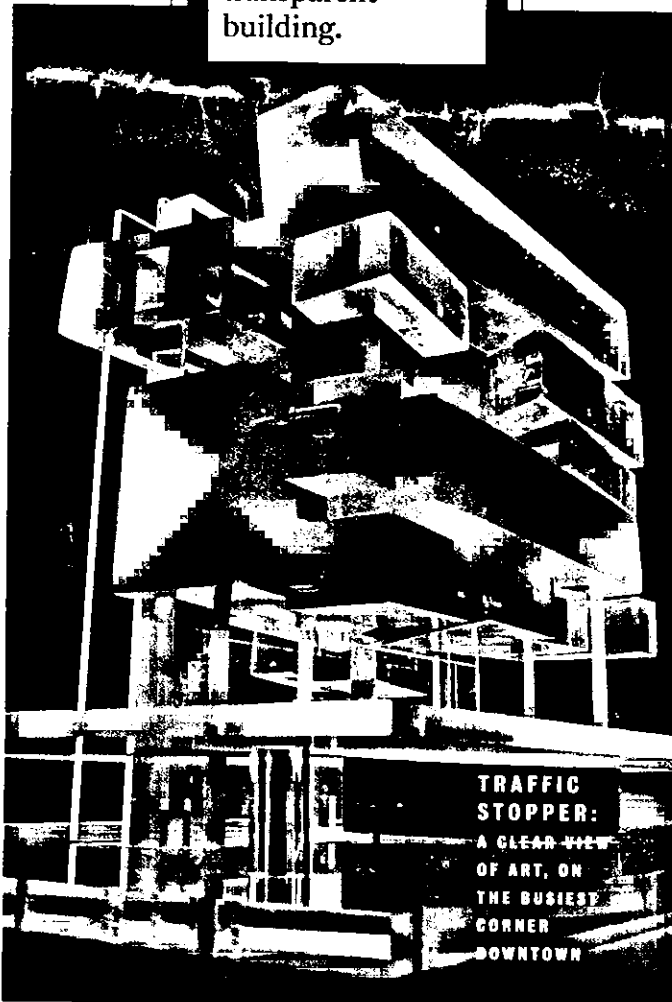
Zaha Hadid

Budget: \$34 million

Completion Date:

Fall 2002

The Scoop: In 1990 the director was arraigned. Soon the center will have a *really* arresting, almost entirely transparent building.



day in 1996 and said her foundation had just bought the 11-acre parcel next to the Kimbell Art Museum, the masterpiece of the late Louis Kahn. And it was Marion who kicked in the gift the museum decorously describes as "substantial" to start the ball rolling. "It's easy to be generous when you love a place as much as I love Ft. Worth," she says. The project now has \$100 million in the bank. One test of how flush the museum feels: when one of Ando's poured-concrete walls turned out to be too mottled, it was torn down on the spot and done anew. Extra cost: \$90,000.

Amid the euphoria of these glamorous new museums, here are some caveats. First, remember this: that sparkling new edifice could look dated or shabby in just a few years. The Los Angeles County Museum of Art opened a very '80s-looking new addition only 15 years ago. Today trustee Eli Broad, the leading force behind the nascent plans to expand once more, says, "If you stand and look across Wilshire Boulevard, there's nothing to be proud of, from an architectural point of view." Second, beware of overhyping. Houston Museum of Fine Arts director Peter Marzio puts it this way: "You tend to promise your donors more than a building can deliver, something like, 'You're sacrificing now, but just wait. This will make the Taj Mahal look like an outhouse.' Then, when it's not the Taj Mahal, attendance and revenues can dip." That said, Marzio is presiding over a new addition by Spanish architect Rafael Moneo that's generated so much good will, the museum's now raised almost as much as what the building cost—\$80 million—to acquire art for the collection.

And looking at art, don't forget, is what museums are all about. "Appreciating art is a serious activity, requiring concentration, knowledge and a certain acceptance of authority," says Phillippe de Montebello, director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. "It's not the fare of millions who want quick thrills." But millions of people who do want to appreciate great art are flocking to museums. And just because they can also lunch in a nice restaurant, take in a film or shop for Aunt Thelma's birthday present while they're there doesn't mean they're not looking at the paintings. Nor is it a bad thing to feel a little civic pride at strolling through a city's snazziest piece of architecture. One of these days, it may well be the art-museum experience that really makes Milwaukee famous. ■

Healthy colonies of gut flora can also ease the inflammation caused by food allergies, Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis and irritable-bowel syndrome. These conditions arise when the body misidentifies harmless enteric bacteria as pathogens and mounts an immune response. Some doctors now use probiotic supplements as therapy for these conditions, hoping the friendly bacteria will displace the indigenous strains causing the inflammation. And researchers have recently begun testing genetically modified bacteria as treatments for various inflammatory disorders—a pursuit that could take the science of probiotics to a whole new level.

Does a healthy person need daily probiotic capsules? Gorbach doesn't think so. But if you suffer from lactose intolerance, food allergies or traveler's diarrhea—or you've spent the last three months popping penicillin—an extra hit of friendly bacteria is worth considering. Europeans have long championed yogurt and fermented milk as tonics for good health. But Americans consume fewer fermented dairy products than any other developed country. It may be no coincidence that 60 to 70 percent of us complain of digestive ills.

What is the best way to boost your bacterial intake? Food and drug companies now peddle probiotics in pills, powders and liquids. Probiotics normally take about three days to affect your system. They have almost no side effects, but as dietary supplements they aren't subject to rigorous quality-inspection or labeling rules. "Many times the bug [advertised on the label] is not even there," says Dr. Roger Clemens of California State Polytechnic University. Experts recommend buying a reputable brand, such as Danon, Nature's Way, Imodium or Culturelle. Look for a label that promises "live and active cultures," and make sure it carries an expiration date. Most products need to be kept refrigerated and away from sunlight, though at least one supplement (Culturelle) comes freeze-dried and lasts up to two years.

You can also add probiotics naturally to your diet. Valio just launched a probiotic cheese in Europe. And milk enriched with acidophilus and bifidus now sits on my refrigerator shelf—right beside the mango-mandarin-orange yogurt. The thought of eating bugs may turn your stomach. Get over it. I know they've done wonders for mine. ■