

The Columbian  
**Life**

**Section D**

Today's weather picture by Kayla McMurtry, 9, Pleasant Valley Primary School



FRIDAY, MAY 25, 2007

**Thin people may be fat on inside, docs warn**

By MARIA CHENG  
Associated Press writer

LONDON — If it really is what's on the inside that counts, then a lot of thin people might be in trouble.

Some doctors now think that the internal fat surrounding vital organs like the heart, liver or pancreas — invisible to the naked eye — could be as dangerous as the more obvious external fat that bulges underneath the skin.

"Being thin doesn't automatically mean you're not fat," said Dr. Jimmy Bell, a professor of molecular imaging at Imperial College, London. Since 1994, Bell and his team have scanned nearly 800 people with MRI machines to create "fat maps" showing where people store fat.

According to the data, people who maintain their weight through diet rather than exercise are likely to have major deposits of internal fat, even if they are otherwise slim. "The whole concept of being fat needs to be redefined," said Bell, whose research is funded by Britain's Medical Research Council.

Without a clear warning signal — like a rounder middle — doctors worry that thin people may be lulled into falsely assuming that because

**More health & fitness stories, D3**

they're not overweight, they're healthy.

"Just because someone is lean doesn't make them immune to diabetes or other risk factors for heart disease," said Dr. Louis Teichholz, chief of cardiology at Hackensack University Medical Center in New Jersey, who was not involved in Bell's research.

Even people with normal Body Mass Index scores — a standard obesity measure that divides your weight by the square of your height — can have surprising levels of fat deposits inside.

Of the women scanned by Bell and his colleagues, as many as 45 percent of those with normal BMI scores (20 to 25) actually had excessive levels of internal fat. Among men, the percentage was nearly 60 percent.

Relating the news to what Bell calls "TOFIs" — people who are "thin outside, fat inside" — is rarely uneventful. "The thinner people are, the bigger the surprise," he said, adding the researchers even found TOFIs among people who are professional models.

According to Bell, people who are fat on the inside are essentially on the threshold of being obese. They eat too many fatty, sugary foods — and exercise too little to work it off — but they are not eating enough to actually be fat. Scientists believe we naturally accumulate fat around the belly first, but at some point, the body may start storing it elsewhere.

Still, most experts believe that being of normal weight is an indicator of good health, and that BMI is a reliable measurement.

"BMI won't give you the exact indication of where fat is, but it's a useful clinical tool," said Dr. Toni Steer, a nutritionist at Britain's Medical Research Council.

Doctors are unsure about the exact dangers of internal fat, but some suspect it contributes to the risk of heart disease and diabetes. They theorize that internal fat disrupts the body's communication systems. The fat enveloping internal organs might be sending the body mistaken chemical signals to store fat inside organs like the liver or pancreas. This could ultimately lead to insulin resistance, type 2 diabetes or heart disease.

The good news is that internal fat can be easily burned off through exercise or even by improving your diet. "Even if you don't see it on your bathroom scale, caloric restriction and physical exercise have an aggressive effect on visceral fat," said Dr. Bob Ross, an obesity expert at Queen's University in Canada.

**Silent threat**

Blind pedestrians find themselves in danger as more quiet hybrid cars take to the roads



Nick Wilks, a student at Washington State School for the Blind, has nearly been hit twice in recent months at this intersection of East Reserve Street and East McLoughlin Boulevard. He has to make the crossing to reach his classes at Hudson's Bay High School.

TROY WAYRYNEN/The Columbian

By BRETT OPPEGAARD  
Columbian staff writer

Each weekday morning, Nick Wilks crosses just one street. That's how the 17-year-old gets from his dorm room at Washington State School for the Blind to classes at Hudson's Bay High School.

The intersection of East Reserve Street and East McLoughlin Boulevard is quiet most of the time. But about 10:35 a.m., when Wilks is on his way back, it's an obstacle course. Parking lots at nearby Clark College are filling. Young drivers on lunch break from Hudson's Bay are often whipping through that intersection from all directions. Wilks has almost been hit by cars there twice this school year.

What's saved him? Hearing the uncomfortably close chugs of combustion engines.

Yet what if cars were silent? That sounds like a futuristic dream, a pleasing idea to those irritated by contemporary noise pollution. But it's a frightening prospect to those, such as Wilks, who rely on sounds to survive.

Hybrid vehicles not only are emitting less toxins in the air and consuming fuel more efficiently, but they are reducing

ambient clatter. A Toyota Prius running on its electric motor, which it typically does at low speeds, is virtually silent.

The National Federation of the Blind has been voicing concerns about the unintended side effect of that silence since shortly after Toyota introduced the Prius, the first mass-produced hybrid, in 2000. The group says these quiet cars are a hazard not only to blind people but also to anyone who needs sounds for safety, including children, the elderly and bicyclists.

"If cars don't make noise, blind people can't safely navigate streets. ... This really is a problem," said John Paré, the National Federation of the Blind's director of public relations.

A blind woman in California recently reported having her foot run over by a Prius. She commented that she didn't even know the car was there before it hit her. Several other blind people have described minor injuries or near misses to the National Federation of the Blind, though the organization hasn't kept detailed records of the complaints. The group forecasts even worse accidents ahead, as the cars become more prevalent, unless automakers develop

some sort of noisemaker for these vehicles.

Hybrids have become a growing trend in American cars. There now are about 400,000 of them on U.S. roads, according to market researchers R.L. Polk & Co. New registrations doubled from 2004 to 2005, the most recent data available.

No pedestrian death has been linked to these cars. But, National Federation of the Blind representatives note, there is no tracking mechanism, either.

Representatives for the two most prominent producers of hybrid cars, Toyota and Honda, say they are aware of the sound concerns and are considering options.

Aerospace materials engineer David Evans, who tested hybrid and electric vehicles at Stanford University in the 1970s, has been lecturing on this topic, including speaking to the National Federation of the Blind. He says early developers of the technology quickly learned that pedestrians couldn't hear the cars and his group used whistles to solve the problem.

But carmakers are hesitant to add noise to the environment, and to incur that expense, said

**The debate**

Should quiet hybrid cars have noisemakers added to them, as a way to alert nearby pedestrians?

■ **On one side:** If that sound will save lives, then why not find an inoffensive tone for these cars to emit?

■ **On another side:** Our lives are polluted enough with noise. Encourage people to cross streets more carefully and drivers to slow near crosswalks.

■ **Get involved:** The National Federation of the Blind can be reached through [nfb.org](http://nfb.org).

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**ON THE WEB**

For a video clip of Washington State School for the Blind student Nick Wilks making his trek to Hudson's Bay High School, see [columbian.com/video](http://columbian.com/video).

Nick Wilks, student body president at the state's school for the blind, says hybrid cars traveling at low speeds can be nearly undetectable to blind pedestrians.

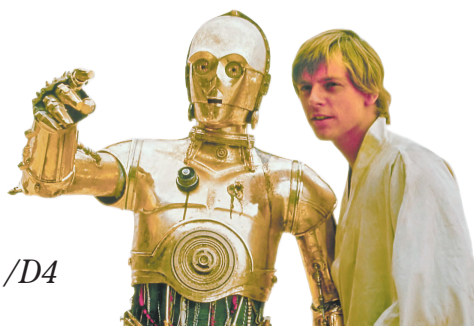
**your Guide:**



**Health:** Surgery an alternative treatment for epilepsy /D3

Get details on Father's Day look-alike contest /D3

May the force be with the fans: 30 years of 'Star Wars' /D4



**Television:** After 15 years, Leno says he has no second thoughts about '09 departure /D7

**Coming Saturday:**

Christian rock fans flock to the amphitheater /D1

# The Force is still with 'Star Wars'

30 years ago, in a theater nearby, film history made

By **ETHAN SACKS**  
*New York Daily News*

It really was a long time ago. Today it'll be exactly 30 years since "Star Wars" blasted away all expectations after opening in just 32 movie theaters on May 25, 1977. The anniversary will be marked by commemorative items, parties and events. It's remarkable to note how, in the days before universe-filling marketing campaigns and studio tracking reports, no one, not even writer-director George Lucas, was prepared for the lines that snaked around theaters showing "Star Wars." Audiences cheered from the opening blasts of John Williams' score to the closing credits, pausing only to boo Darth Vader. Facing high demand for tie-in toys that had yet to be

manufactured, department stores were forced to issue IOUs. In the late 1970s in America, the movie "appealed to people at a time (when) things maybe weren't going great," says Anthony Daniels, who played C-3PO in six movies and several TV specials. "People wanted something to make them feel good." Or as Rick McCallum, producer of the recent prequel trilogy, says, "It was a single moment in time that's not likely to be repeated." The movie that 20th Century Fox nearly abandoned in midproduction ended up earning \$460 million at the box office in the U.S. alone, boosted by the release of a special edition in 1997. The film is the second-highest-grossing movie of all time, behind "Titanic."

There is no competition, however, in the world of toys and other tie-ins. The "Star Wars" franchise has raked in \$13.5 billion in merchandising alone since 1977, according to Lucasfilm. "There's no question that was the film that made the entire movie industry rethink its attitude toward summer movies, toward juvenile movies for big kids, science

fiction, special effects and, of course, merchandising," says film historian Leonard Maltin. This weekend, people who want to praise the Force can celebrate several ways: ■ Now in bookstores is J.W. Rinzler's "The Making of Star Wars" (\$75, Del Rey Books), a mammoth tome so packed with photos and facts, a Wookiee could get a hernia trying to lift it. The book, surprisingly, is a first for "Star Wars." But the author recently said that he stumbled across four boxes of transcripts in the Lucasfilm library archives from interviews that took place between 1975 and 1978, conducted by the film's original head of marketing. The background they provided formed the basis of the book, which is chock-full of anecdotes, behind-the-scenes photos and early storyboard sketches. ■ Thousands of fans are expected to attend a five-day "Celebration IV" party at the Los Angeles Convention Center that ends Monday. Fanboys still nursing childhood crushes on Princess Leia will be excited to see Carrie Fisher in a rare convention appearance, and the apex of the event will be a marathon screening of all six movies in the saga, starting with "Episode I: The Phantom Menace"

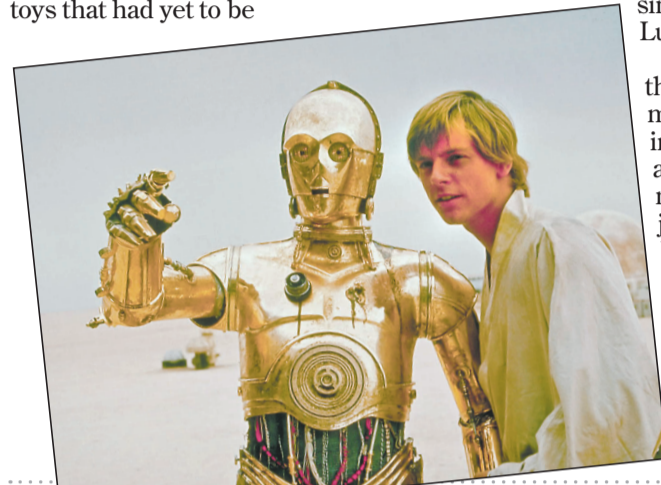


Files  
McClatchy Tribune  
**Stormtroopers attend an Atlanta science fiction convention.**

and ending with "Episode VI: Return of the Jedi."

■ Thought the creature cantina at Mos Eisley spaceport was filled with a motley bunch? Watch "Star Wars: The Legacy Revealed," a new two-hour documentary airing May 28 on the Discovery Channel, and see Newt Gingrich, Dan Rather and House Majority Leader Nancy Pelosi comment alongside "Lord of the Rings" filmmaker Peter Jackson. Far out.

■ To coincide with the anniversary, the U.S. Postal Service is issuing 15 "Star Wars" stamps. (Mailboxes that look like R2-D2 have on the streets for the past few months to promote the release.)



**Mark Hamill plays Luke Skywalker in a scene from "Star Wars."**  
LUCASFILM LTD.

## Lucas lets fans mash up film clips

*The Wall Street Journal*  
George Lucas, creator of "Star Wars," has never hesitated to protect his intellectual property, which is why some call him "Lucas the Litigator." But this week, his Lucasfilm plans to make clips of "Star Wars" available to fans on the Internet to mash up — meaning to remix however they want — at will. The clips — about 250 of them, from all six Star Wars

movies — will land on the [Starwars.com](http://Starwars.com) Web site today, part of this week's 30th-anniversary celebrations of the release of his hit movie. Working with an easy-to-use editing program from Eyespot Corp. of San Diego, fans can cut, add to and retool the clips. Then they can post their creations to blogs or social-networking sites like MySpace. More clips will come out from time to time

over coming months. In essence, Lucasfilm is going to legitimize and streamline a pastime that has become increasingly popular on the Web. A search for "Star Wars" on YouTube, for example, turns up some 98,000 results. While Lucasfilm could fight what amounts to the theft of its property, it has now decided to take the opposite tack. "We see what's going on at

YouTube," says Jeffrey Ulin, senior director for distribution and business affairs at Lucasfilm, who says the company began to think about allowing mash-ups last summer. "We wanted fans to come to [Starwars.com](http://Starwars.com) as the center of fan activity." Currently, he estimates, the site attracts about 2 million unique monthly visitors; he anticipates the new content will boost traffic significantly.

## '5-second rule' works on campus

*The Virginian-Pilot*  
A pair of biology seniors at Connecticut College in New London, Conn., decided to test the oft-cited maxim that food that sits less than five seconds on a floor remains safe to eat. They used a well-traveled section of the college cafeteria; apple slices "because they were free," and Skittles, since there's an assumption that dry food is less susceptible to contamination, said researcher Molly Goettsche. Food was dropped off the edge of a cafeteria table. One pair of edibles sat on the floor for five seconds; others for 10, 30 and 60 seconds, or for five minutes. The results: No bacteria were found on any food left on the floor for up to half a minute. Apple slices and Skittles both got germy after a minute (one Skittle took five minutes). Goettsche, 23 and heading for a career in biotech market research, said she would not eat from a floor despite the findings.

## Threat:

**From Page D1**  
Denise Morrissey, a spokeswoman for Toyota Motor Sales USA.

"The (industry) trend is toward quiet powertrains in all sorts of vehicles," she said. "That trend has raised the need for other drivers and pedestrians to increase caution and to be more aware of the surroundings."

Honda spokesman Sage Marie says this topic is a broad manufacturer's concern, not something that each company should be pursuing individually. He says the solution invariably will come through a collaboration among government regulators from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, concerned groups such as the National Federation of the Blind, and the industry's trade associations, including the Association of International Automobile Manufacturers.

Michael Cammisa, director of safety for that auto trade group, did not return multiple telephone calls requesting an interview for this story. Stein of the National Federation of the Blind and others already have begun lobbying the Society of Automotive Engineers to develop protocols for minimum sound levels for vehicles sold in the U.S.

Stein said her group is proactively navigating the bureaucracy before someone gets killed or seriously injured in an accident that could have been prevented.

In the meantime, blind pedestrians feel vulnerable. Wilks, the Washington State School for the Blind's student body president, said sound signals are particularly important to alert pedestrians to cars making right turns across walkways.

Wilks was in the crosswalk between his schools a few months ago when two cars, both turning right, pinned him in the middle. In another incident, in January, he was about to step into the crosswalk when a driver decided to speed up and make a right turn directly in front of him. "That was really scary," he said. "I was just a couple of feet from the car."

Both times, he said, the sounds of the combustion engines helped him to avoid injury.

The National Federation of the Blind has become concerned enough about this perceived threat that it conducted an experiment this year at its annual conference. About 30 blind or visually impaired members waited at an intersection in front of the group's headquarters in Baltimore and were asked to signal when they could hear a car approach. A Prius went by undetected. They repeated the experiment in a quiet alley. The Prius that time could be heard, but only at about 15 feet away.

Stein said, "I was aware, in the abstract, that we were going to have electric cars that are very quiet, and something would have to be done to make those pedestrian-friendly. Then, all of sudden these things were out on the road, and nothing had been done."

Stein said the National Federation of the Blind supports hybrid cars and their benefits. But the group also wants to ensure they are safe for pedestrians.

The organization is pitching for a device that makes the usual engine noise: "We want something that's not going to be irritating to people. We're hoping for a low-tech, inexpensive solution that can be an automatic add-on."

The Washington State School for the Blind, meanwhile, has a dilemma. As a state agency, its staff reports directly to an office in Olympia. That means four or five road trips a week from the Vancouver school, plus the 300 to 600 miles a week that teachers drive to serve students throughout the state. The staff makes those trips in a fleet of four hybrid vehicles.

Principal Craig Meador acknowledges the irony. "I kind of look at it this way: The technology is here, whether we like it or not," he said. "The issue isn't so much that we are doing a good job with our gas mileage as, are we supporting something that can be a danger and sometimes lethal to the blind community? That concerns us."

He added, "We're probably going to see more of these kinds of things on the market. We need to teach (blind students) to operate safely around these cars, rather than to bury our head in the sand."

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