

# healthflash

**TV guide** Watching *Grey's Anatomy* may raise your health IQ, suggests a new survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation in Menlo Park, California. Before an episode on the topic, only 15 percent of viewers knew an HIV-positive mom has a 98 percent plus chance of having a healthy baby. Afterward, 61 percent retained the information.

Medical dramas can educate, but don't believe everything you see. (Sadly, not all doctors look like Patrick Dempsey.)

**Breathe easier** Stress can aggravate allergy symptoms ► and may trigger a strong response to allergens that hadn't previously caused a reaction, say experts at The Ohio State University at Columbus. Exercise regularly to de-stress. *Achoo* averted!



A cloudy outlook can worsen wheezing.

**What a drag** Even social smokers have an increased risk for heart disease, a study at the University of Georgia in Athens shows. The arteries of occasional smokers are 36 percent less responsive to changes in blood flow than those of nonsmokers. The next time you crave one, bum gum instead.

**Doctor diaries** Physician blogs such as KevinMD.com and GruntDoc.com can give you the inside scoop on the latest health headlines, clinical trials and how to obtain the care you want. Get the gossip, but surf cautiously. If you need medical care, contact your M.D.

**Hold, please** Roughly 10 percent of women ages 20 to 39 suffer from incontinence due to pelvic-floor disorder, a condition in which pelvic muscles are weakened by weight gain or childbirth, according to a report in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Too much caffeine can exacerbate symptoms, so stick to two cups or less a day to mind your pees.

**The l'eau down** A test of 10 bottled waters found mixtures of 38 chemical pollutants—an average of 8 in each brand—notes the Environmental Working Group in Washington, D.C. Save money, your health and the planet by investing in a faucet filter. Try one by Pur (\$40 and up; PurWater.com).

**Do you copy?** Many women choose birth control based on what their friends are using, leading to misinformation about its impact on their fertility, weight and mood, the *Journal of Family Planning and Reproductive Health Care* finds. Get the facts at PlannedParenthood.org, then talk to your doc.