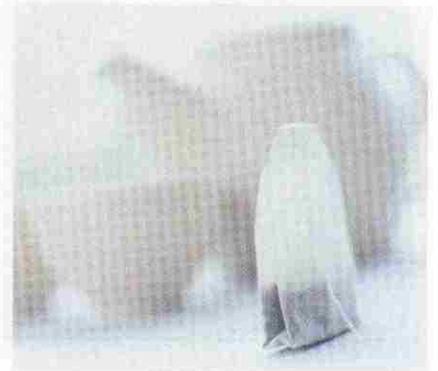


## junk-food junkies

A diet of calorie-rich, high-fat foods may trigger chemical changes that make the body less resistant to the hormone leptin, which influences eating behavior, and to the amino acid protein galanin, which stimulates the desire to eat. As a result of these changes, says Michael Schwartz, an endocrinologist at the University of Washington in Seattle, "the brain loses its ability to respond to these hormones as body fat increases." In layman's terms, fast food may be addictive, according to *New Scientist* magazine, which reviewed a number of studies in its February 2003 issue. The only other things that have such a profound effect on people, says John Hoebel, a Princeton University psychologist, are sex and drugs.



The Saudis love black tea—and with good reason. Six cups a day lowered the coronary heart-disease risk of participants in a study in the January 2003 *Preventive Medicine* by more than 50 percent. Black tea is loaded with antioxidant flavonoids that reduce the risk of stroke, clotting and hardening of the arteries.

tea-riffic!



## RED, RED WINE

French wines are richer in heart-healthy flavonoids than German wines, enabling them to boost the levels of a special enzyme in the body by as much as four times. The enzyme—called endothelial nitric oxide synthase—protects blood vessels from clotting and prevents plaque from building up. German scientists, not patriotic Frenchmen, reached these conclusions, the February 3, 2003 *Journal of the American College of Cardiology* reports. "One or two glasses of red wine in the evening is good for you," lead researcher Ulrich Forstermann, MD, PhD, of Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, Germany, says. *À votre santé!*

## B Smart

A study of 92 other studies suggests that homocysteine—a little-known amino acid—may be as big a factor in causing cardiovascular disease as better-known cholesterol, the November 23, 2002 *British Medical Journal* reports. But homocysteine is also more easily and inexpensively controlled. To lower homocysteine levels, say the

researchers, take folic acid, found in B vitamins. "Our results indicate that an estimated 16 percent of heart attacks and about 24 percent of strokes can be prevented just by taking a folic acid supplement every day," says David Wald, MD, of Southampton General Hospital's Department of Cardiology.

