

Some can't adapt

Species living in restricted environments such as the tropics may lack adequate variation in their genes and be unable to adapt to climate change, according to a new study.

Adaptation is a physiological or behavioural change that makes an organism better suited to its environment, and more likely to survive and reproduce. Because adaptations usually occur due to a change (or mutation) in a gene, species with a more varied set of genes to begin with, are likely to have a better basis for adaptation.

University of Melbourne's Professor Ary Hoffmann from the Centre for Environmental Stress and Adaptation Research (CESAR), Bio21 Institute, says the new findings suggest specialist species have a fundamental evolutionary limit, and will be unable to respond to future climate changes.

The work was conducted by a team of Melbourne and Monash University researchers from CESAR, and will be published in the journal *Science*.

Photo of Drosophila melanogaster and Drosophila birchii by Dr Andrew Weeks.



More boys stay fat

University of Melbourne Professor George Patton from the Centre for Adolescent Health at the Royal Children's Hospital studied 2000 young Victorians, investigating how and why adolescents become overweight.

Results revealed that adolescent boys are more likely to stay overweight into their twenties. Girls in their teens put a lot more effort in controlling their weight and for that reason are likely to have a normal weight in their early twenties. The study also found that rates of overweight and obesity almost double between the ages 17 and 24 years.

"The good news is a young person who has been overweight for less than 12 months and persists with efforts to control weight can halve the likelihood for still being overweight at the age of 24," Patton says.

Testosterone improves learning

Monash research shows that testosterone treatment improves brain function in healthy postmenopausal women.

Professor Susan Davis (pictured) and Dr Sonia Davison of the Women's Health Program treated 10 women aged 45 to 60 years with a daily skin spray of testosterone for six months. The women showed improvements in visual and verbal learning and memory on sensitive computerised tests after treatment. They also underwent tests of brain function while undergoing an MRI scan.



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