Magnolia bark found effective against oral germs

Although U.S. life expectancy has reached an all-time high of 77.9 years, 43 other countries have higher life expectancies.

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Vermont surpassed Minnesota as the healthiest state in the nation, with Minnesota, Hawaii, New Hampshire and Connecticut, respectively, rounding out the top five. Mississippi is the least healthy state, followed by Louisiana, Arkansas, Oklahoma and Tennessee.

The Census Bureau reports that the number of uninsured Americans has worsened from 15.4 percent in 1990 to 15.8 percent today. "Up 0.5 percent from last year, an alarming 47 million Americans are living without health insurance," the report charges. "Tragically, more than 9 million of the uninsured are children."

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The Boston University study, which began in 1968 and tracked dental and physical health over 50 years, showed that smokers who quit see an improvement in oral health, and the amount of time a person smokes and the duration a person remains smoke-free directly affects risk.

A man who smokes for fewer than four years has a 20 percent greater risk of needing treatment than does a non-smoker, but the risk doubles for men who smoke from five to 12 years, and it is 120 percent higher for men who smoke for more than 12 years. If a person stays smoke-free for nine years, his risk drops back to the level for someone who never smoked.