

Do you know what's good for you?



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News

Do you know what's good for you?



Should international travel be banned in the face of swine flu? Should life-saving drugs be withheld because they're too expensive? Should the government ban alcohol? And are bacon sandwiches really that dangerous?

welcometrust

Plus may seem like an unlikely place to look for answers to these questions, but this is about to change. With support from the Wellcome Trust, we're launching a new project, called *Do you know what's good for you?*, which will look at the role of mathematics and statistics in the biomedical sciences. And it's an important role indeed. Mathematical models lie at the heart of evidence-based medicine, simulating the spread of diseases, the biological processes that cause them, and the workings of the drugs that may cure them. Statistics quantify the risks and benefits of medical interventions and life style choices, and are used to work out if social policies are likely to be effective. Numbers communicating these risks and benefits clutter the newspaper headlines, but a single number is rarely sufficient to paint the whole picture. And if someone's put a crafty spin on a particular statistic, it takes more than a casual read to put things right.



Bad for the body, good for the soul?

Do you know what's good for you?

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As part of our new project, we're launching a [rolling news desk](#) which will respond to health stories as they hit the news. We'll help you read between the headlines by picking apart the statistics and exposing the evidence that hides behind them. Complementing the news desk will be a series of in-depth articles and podcasts exploring a range of biomedical topics, from epidemiology to clinical trials of medical treatments. Our articles will look at how risk is quantified, and how sober statistics are turned into policy, and we'll debate ethical issues surrounding evidence-based medicine, from the cost effectiveness of drugs to the use of DNA evidence in court.

We'll work with international experts to bring you health and biomedical news stories and in-depth material in special issues to be published over the next 18 months. (To see what to expect from the project, have a look at health-related *Plus* [features](#) and [news](#) in our archive.) But we'd also like you to be part of the debate. We'll be running a series of online polls about health issues, and you can always take part in the discussions on our [blog](#). And if you'd like to be kept informed on relevant articles, podcasts, polls and debates, see the various ways of [subscribing](#) to *Plus*.

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Plus is part of the family of activities in the Millennium Mathematics Project, which also includes the [NRICH](#) and [MOTIVATE](#) sites.