



Check Your Email. Open Your Files.
Access Your Network. Use Your Applications.

From Anywhere
GoToMyPC™
FREE TRIAL

ACCESS YOUR PC FROM ANYWHERE

Welcome, Guest

[Personalize News Home Page](#) - [Sign In](#)

Yahoo! News

Thu, Apr 03, 2003

Search for

Search [Advanced](#)

[News Front Page](#)

- [Top Stories](#)
- [War with Iraq](#)
- [Business](#)
- [World](#)
- [Entertainment](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Technology](#)
- [Politics](#)
- [Science](#)
- ▶ [Health](#)
 - [Weight Loss](#)
 - [Sexual Health](#)
 - [Medications/Drugs](#)
 - [Parenting/Kids](#)
 - [Seniors/Aging](#)
 - [Diseases/Conditions](#)
- [Oddly Enough](#)
- [Op/Ed](#)
- [Lifestyle](#)
- [Local](#)
- [Comics](#)
- [News Photos](#)
- [Weather](#)
- [Most Popular](#)
- [Audio/Video](#)
- [Full Coverage](#)
- [Lottery](#)
- [Crosswords](#)
- [News for Kids](#)

News Resources

- Providers**
- [Reuters](#)
 - [AP](#)
 - [HealthScoutNews](#)
 - [Acurian](#)
 - [ACS News Today](#)
 - [AFP **NEW!**](#)

Search News

Search: for

[Advanced](#)

Health - Reuters

You Yawn, We All Yawn--And Empathy May Explain Why

Fri Mar 14, 2:06 PM ET

 [Add Health - Reuters](#) to My Yahoo!

By *Alison McCook*

NEW YORK (Reuters Health) - Why does just glimpsing a stranger's yawn trigger yawning in others? One group of researchers lays the blame on a very human trait: empathy.

In Yahoo! Health



[Heartburn](#)
Is it GERD?

More from Yahoo! Health:

- [What the heck is GERD?](#)
- [Acid indigestion?](#)
- [Stop heartburn](#)
- [Addicted to antacids?](#)

Dr. Steven M. Platek at Drexel University in Philadelphia and his colleagues found that people who are prone to so-called contagious yawning also tend to score highly on tests that measure levels of empathy, or fellow-feeling with others.

This finding suggests that some people are so in-tune with what others may be feeling that, in certain situations, they mimic that behavior, Platek told Reuters Health.

These may also be the same people who say "ouch" when some one else stubs her toe or steps on a sharp object, he noted.

Platek and his colleagues, who presented their findings at the Eastern Psychological Association Annual Meeting in Baltimore, determined whether 65 undergraduate students were prone to contagious yawning by observing them while they watched a video.

The video contained images of people who were laughing, yawning, or lacked expression. Researchers observed the study participants through one-way mirrors, and noted if the students laughed or yawned in response to the video.

More than 40% of the people who watched the videos yawned in response to an image of a person yawning, the authors note. Of those who exhibited contagious yawning, 60% did so more than once.

The ability to feel empathy for others--to the extent that it causes us to mimic their behavior such as through contagious yawning--may be any evolutionary trait that serves our species well, Platek noted.

Only humans, chimpanzees, and orangutans are able to show signs of empathy, he noted, and this trait may confer certain advantages to the species: namely, binding social groups through their feelings for each other, and bringing everyone closer together.

Based on the findings from the current study, Platek and his colleagues suggest that chimps and orangutans may also engage in contagious yawning.

All students also completed a personality test that measures traits resembling those of people with schizophrenia that are considered normal in healthy individuals.


These so-called schizotypal traits relate to the current investigation in that some schizophrenics are unable to empathize with others, Platek said in an interview. As such, he reasoned, people who score highly on tests of schizotypal traits may be less prone to contagious yawning.

Indeed, this is exactly what he and his colleagues discovered. People with more schizotypal traits were less likely to show contagious yawning.

He added that people who do not experience contagious yawning should not believe they are schizophrenic or more likely than others to become so. None of the people in the current study had schizophrenia, he noted, and many of them


abc NEWS LIVE
on Yahoo! Platinum
LIVE VIDEO COVERAGE OF BREAKING WAR NEWS
[click to subscribe](#)


ADVERTISEMENT



GET A FREE NOKIA 3360

PLUS FREE SHIPPING
*with select plans and recurring billing online.

GO 



Services

- [Daily Emails](#)
- [Free News Alerts](#)

Education for Health Professionals

- [Online Graduate Degrees in Health](#)
 - [Online Bachelor Degrees in Health](#)
- from [Yahoo! Education](#)

did not yawn in response to images of people yawning.

Platek noted that the current findings could, instead, be used to help psychiatrists and other experts interpret what form of schizophrenia or schizophrenic personality disorder a particular person has.

There are several different types of the condition, he said, and while some people with schizophrenia lack empathy, others appear delusional, or even violent.

Determining whether or not a person exhibits contagious yawning might help experts understand if their disorder involves a lack of ability to understand how others feel, Platek said.

"It might give you insight into the type of disorder this person has," he noted.

 [Email Story](#)  [Post/Read Msgs](#)  [Print Story](#)

Ratings: Would you recommend this story?
Not at all [1](#) - [2](#) - [3](#) - [4](#) - [5](#) Highly

Next Story: [Fashionable Facemasks Cover Deep Fears About Virus](#) (Reuters)

More [Health](#) Stories

- [China Shows SARS Outbreak May Be Slowing](#) (AP)
- [No Broccoli, Mom!](#) (HealthSCOUT)
- [Drug Reduces Deaths And Hospital Stays in Heart Attack Patients With Heart Failure](#) (Acurian)
- [FDA Approves New Cervical Cancer Screening Test](#) (American Cancer Society)
- [WHO team in Guangdong as SARS toll mounts](#) (AFP)

Weekly Specials	ADVERTISEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planning to Sell or Buy a Home this Spring?• Home Equity Rates as Low as 4.0% - LendingTree.com• Too much Debt? Say Goodbye to Debt Forever!!• Mortgage Rates at Historic Lows! Bad Credit OK.• Eat your veggies...or go to geico.com• Fast Tax Refund! File online with TurboTax® For the WebSM• Save up to 70% on Life Insurance. Get Instant Quotes!• Too much Debt? Say Goodbye to Debt Forever!!• Access Your Work PC from Home and leave your Laptop Behind!• TRADE FREE for a MONTH!	

Copyright © 2003 Reuters Limited. All rights reserved. Republication or redistribution of Reuters content is expressly prohibited without the prior written consent of Reuters. Reuters shall not be liable for any errors or delays in the content, or for any actions taken in reliance thereon.

Copyright © 2003 Yahoo! Inc. All rights reserved.

[Questions or Comments](#)

[Privacy Policy](#) - [Terms of Service](#) - [Ad Feedback](#)