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Health news: How probiotics help your liver and fibre-optic sensors monitor healing of broken bones

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Probiotics - or 'good bacteria' - may help livers damaged by too much alcohol. New research shows that daily probiotics can lower levels of chemicals associated with liver damage.

One of the tell-tale signs, even at an early stage, is a higher level of liver enzymes in the blood.

In the joint study by doctors at the Northern State Medical University in Russia, and the University of Louisville School of Medicine, heavy drinkers were given probiotics for five days.



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Heavy drinkers could protect their liver with probiotics - or 'good bacteria', a study suggests

They found after even this short period, the drinkers' levels of liver enzymes were reduced.

Probiotics could help protect your liver

Fibre optics have already revolutionised information technology.

Now the fibres that carry light signals and data could soon be put inside broken bones to help doctors monitor how well these are healing.

Every year around 1.8million people in the UK break a bone.

Although the vast majority of fractures heal without problems, a small number of patients will experience complications where the bone fails to heal or fuses together incorrectly.

A common problem is excessive weight bearing too early, which can cause the bone move out of alignment and affects how well it heals.

At the moment, surgeons are guided by X-rays and patient symptoms to determine whether a fracture is healing properly.

Now scientists have developed an implant that uses fibre-optic technology to monitor broken bones from within the body. Surgeons embed the device - the Fracture Repair Implant (FRIEND) - into the bone near the break.

The implant contains tiny sensors which detect any small movement at points on the bone (a sign that the fractured pieces have not fused back together).

The information from the sensors is relayed back to a computer using wireless technology.

It gives orthopaedic surgeons a clear picture of how well the bone is healing, also helping them to fine-tune the weight bearing advice they give to the patient.

Once the bone is healed the implant would then be removed.

Mohamed Khalid, an orthopaedic consultant at the University of Alabama and director of the firm which developed the device, said: 'The technology could drastically cut the

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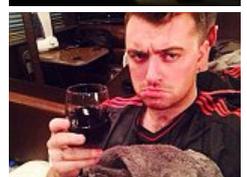
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