THE IRISH NEWS

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Seven most common causes of snoring

Continued from P27

1 Sleep apnoea.

■ 'WE WILL NOT REST': RTE

presenter Miriam O'Callaghan with Cathy McClafferty and

Streptococcus awareness campaign. Cathy's niece Grace McGroarty

Primetime

Sinead McClafferty supporting the Group B

2 Overeating and/or lack of exercise can lead to more fat around the throat, which means there is insufficient muscle tone to keep the airway open enough throughout the night.

Alcohol and sleeping pills can relax the muscles around the upper airway, as well as causing nasal airway irritation and congestion.

4 Smoking can irritate the lining of the nose and throat, causing swelling and catarrh, which makes it difficult to breathe through the nose.

5 Sleeping on your back may lead

to the tongue and soft palate falling back into the throat, thereby narrowing the airway.

6 Allergies can cause nasal congestion.

7 Breathing through the mouth while sleeping can mean the air hitting the back of the throat creates vibrations in the soft tissue.



■ GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP: Sleeping on your back can cause snoring Fitness guide for under-5s

CHILDREN under the age of five should exercise for at least three hours a day. Babies should be taken swimming and play on babygym mats while toddlers should walk for at least 15 minutes of routine journeys, such as to nursery. The exercise guidance issued by the Department of Health in England targets under-fives for the first time and comes amid growing fears over childhood obesity. "For children that are not yet walking, there is considerable evidence that letting children crawl, play or roll around on the floor is essential during early years," England's chief medical officer Sally Davies

said.
"I think there are parents who are not aware how important it is for their children to be physically active for a minimum of three hours." According to NHS figures, nearly a quarter of youngsters aged four and five are overweight or obese. Experts predict that by 2050 this could apply to 63 per cent of children.



■ CONCERN: According to the NHS, nearly 25 per cent of children aged four and five are overweight or obese

Autism 'gene' investigated

A SMILE or a frown could hold the key to helping identify families with a higher risk of autism. People with autism often struggle to read other people's emotions and their brains process facial expressions differently to those without autism. Researchers at the University of Cambridge have found that siblings of those with autism show similar brain patterns when viewing facial expressions. The findings could help scientists identify a 'biomarker', used to identify genes linked to an increased familial risk of autism. The study compared 40 families that had both a teenager with autism and a sibling without with 40 teenagers with no family history of autism. By comparing the brain's activity when viewing a happy versus a neutral face, the scientists were able to observe the areas within the brain that respond. Even though siblings of those with autism did not have a diagnosis they had decreased activity in various areas of the brain.

died aged just 20 days from the infection. Sinead's son Finn also contracted the infection but survived

Families step up campaign for group B strep testing

HE parents of three babies who died from group B streptococcus (GBS) infection have stepped up their campaign to change the health system. Jillian and Andy Boyd lost their first

Jillian and Andy Boyd lost their first born, baby Erin, during labour on March 27. Mark and Sarah Cowan lost their baby boy Harry at just 11 hours old on April 27. Both babies had been perfectly healthy but were tragically, and fatally, infected with group B strep during labour.

and latally, inlected with group B strep during labour. Both mothers had completely uncomplicated, healthy pregnancies. But if they had been aware of group B strep, they could have had a simple test at just 35 to 37 weeks which might have detected that they were carriers of the bacteria.

argin new decrease in a significant for a significant for a strep in Northern Ireland or Britain, and with no information given to them, neither couple was to know. Nine out of 10 pregnant women have never heard of this potentially fatal bacteria

Dacteria. The couples have now come together to work towards a lasting legacy for both Erin and Harry and are calling on parents similarly affected to contact them on a dedicated email address – gbsni@hotmail.co.uk.

"We simply can't rest until changes are made. We just want to save other families from going through the unspeakable hell that we're experiencing at the moment," the families said in a statement. "We have had very positive meetings with the chair of the assembly health committee, Michelle Gildernew, and other members of the committee. "However, to strengthen the case to introduce changes to Northern Ireland's antenatal care we are asking families of babies affected by group B strep, both those who have thankfully recovered and those who, like us, have not to get in touch

have not, to get in touch.

"We also want to hear from people who have been known to carry GBS, been treated with antibiotics during labour and gone on to have healthy babies with no infections. This can only strengthen the call for routine

The families plan to give a presentation to the assembly health

committee and to health minister Edwin Poots "to ask for vital and life-saving changes in our antenatal care which will allow expectant women to make informed decisions for themselves about how their pregnancy and labour is handled and most importantly save newborn babies from the devastating effects of this bacteria".

The campaign has three simple messages, they said: "B aware, B tested and anti-B-iotics.

tested and anni-B-totics.

"Since introducing routine swabbing in the US, incidences of group B strep infection in newborns have dropped by a dramatic 80 per cent," the families said

families said.
"How incredible would it be if
Northern Ireland could take the lead
in the UK in making similar changes
so that others do not have to go
through the torment we're at present
experiencing"

experiencing."
The deaths of Erin and Harry are just some of the recent tragic stories of

families who have been shattered by group B strep infection. In June 2009 Grace McGroarty from Derry also died at just 20 days old from meningitis brought on from the infection.

Grace's parents Shauna and Stephen McGroarty, have already given the Boyd and Cowan families their support.

support. Among those supporting the campaign is RTE *Primetime* presenter Miriam O'Callaghan.

"As a mum I am more than happy to lend my support to this campaign which will ultimately lead to the lives of more babies being saved, sparing parents the heartbreak of watching their precious newborn child battling with this preventable infection," she

■ For more information on the group B streptococcus campaign email gbsni@hotmail.co.uk.
A seven-mile sponsored walk at Strangford Lough in memory of baby Erin has been organised for Saturday August 27 with all proceeds going to the Group B Strep Support charity, Gbss.org.uk. Sponsor forms are available at Erininheaven.blogspot.com or by email from gbsni@hotmail.co.uk.

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- Boyd and Cowan statement