



Weather Why's with Dr Karl

Weather and Humans

When it rains, our skin gets wet, and when it's sunny, our skin gets warm and dry. So the weather affects our outsides. But does it affect our insides?

Many people claim that their medical conditions react to the weather and can be used to predict it. For example, when granddad's arthritis plays up, he says rain must be on the way.



Soon after the American Civil War, Dr S.W. Mitchell looked at amputees, pain, and weather. He found that a combination of falling barometric pressure and rising temperature and humidity produced nerve pains in amputees.

The reason is still unclear. One theory is that "scarred" skin might expand and contract in a different way to "healthy" skin in response to changes in temperature and humidity. This may register as "pain" to a human. Fairly soft correlations have been found between the weather and such diverse ailments as arthritis, rheumatism and even heart attacks.

Some interesting studies conducted in the United States during the 1980s also showed a link between the weather and the number of phone calls to local crisis centres, suggesting a possible link between the weather and various forms of depression. That is probably no surprise. Most of us prefer sunny weather and don't enjoy being locked indoors by driving rain.

But the eminent climatologist, the late Helmut Landsberg, noted a "statistically relevant" correlation between falling barometric pressure and the onset of non-induced labour in childbirth.¹

Perhaps weather forecasts of the future will contain comfort predictions, psychological alerts and gynaecological warnings along with the regular indicators.

¹ "Weather Climate and You", Helmut Landsberg, *Weatherwise*, October 1986