

O

THE OPRAH
MAGAZINE

LIVE YOUR BEST LIFE

72 PAGES OF

COMFORT & JOY!

- BIGGEST "O LIST" EVER
- GORGEOUS GIFTS, FROM \$13
- NEW TRADITIONS, NEW MEMORIES

...YOUR HOLIDAYS
JUST GOT HAPPIER

24 SHORTCUTS!
DO EVERYTHING FASTER,
BETTER, EASIER

WHAT TO EAT
SO YOU'LL NEVER BE
HUNGRY AGAIN

SCREWING UP
HOW TO TURN EVERY
FLOP INTO A TRIUMPH

PEACE, NOW!
BROUGHT TO YOU BY...
RICHARD BRANSON?
THE O INTERVIEW

**DOES YOUR DOCTOR
THINK HE'S GOD?**
HOW TO GET HIM (OR HER!)
TO TREAT YOU RIGHT

O'S PARTY KIT
GOOD NEWS FOR
THE RELUCTANT HOSTESS

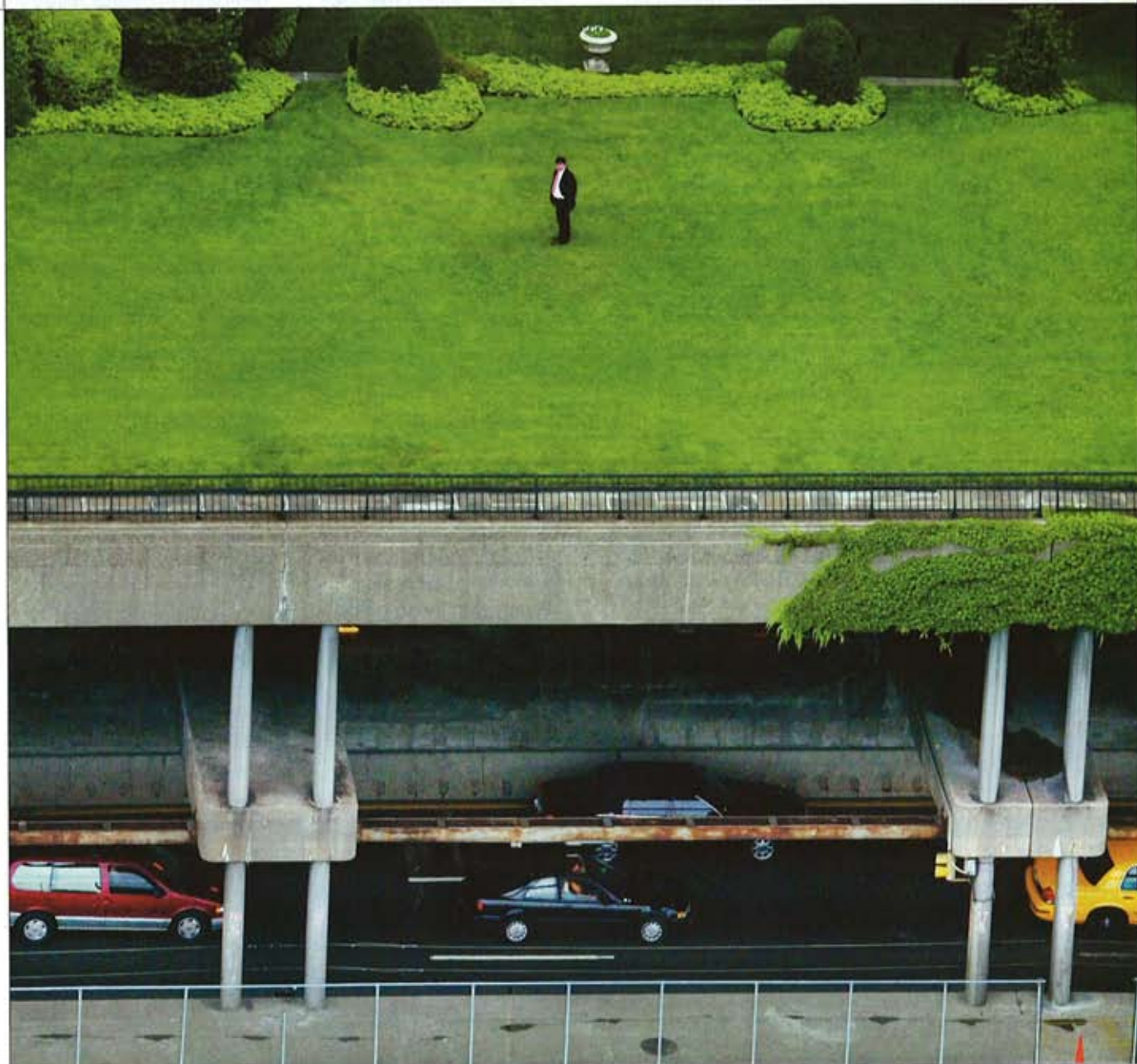
DECEMBER 2007 \$4.50



0 75470 08616 8 1 2>

OPRAH.COM

\$4.50 US/\$5.75 Canada/Foreign



Is Your Zip Code Healthy?

Where you live may be as crucial to your well-being as *how* you live.

STEP OUTSIDE your home and take a look around.

Mounting research is demonstrating that there are definite health risks

to living near heavy traffic and constant noise.

■ **THERE'S SOMETHING IN THE AIR.** "Within 100 to 200 meters of a major road

is where you'll find elevated levels of a handful of major pollutants," says Jonathan Levy, ScD, associate professor of environmental health and risk assessment

at the Harvard School of Public Health. Soot and nitrogen oxide from car and truck exhaust are most concentrated within this zone—though vehicle ➤

emissions can travel up to 500 meters. Stop-and-go driving—whether it's on city streets or suburban freeways—generates as much as three times the pollution of free-flowing traffic.

The health costs can be chronic respiratory problems like asthma and bronchitis. Other research suggests that car pollution may harm the cardiovascular system, triggering clots and inflammation in blood vessels, hardening the arteries, and elevating blood pressure. Exposure to exhaust pollutants has also been linked to cancer (breast, lung, leukemia) and preterm birth.

■ **THE SOUND OF...TRAFFIC.**

Besides cars and trucks, the churn of unwanted sound from construction, booming stereos, barking dogs—you name it—acts as a stressor, eliciting the body's fight-or-flight response, which can translate to higher blood pressure and heart rate. The World Health Organization

estimates that roughly 3 percent of ischemic heart disease in Europe is attributable to long-term exposure to traffic noise.

■ **SAVE YOURSELF.** Barring a move to the country, managing air and noise pollution is tricky. Experts recommend focusing your efforts on your bedroom, where you spend the majority of time at home.

Position your sleeping quarters away from the street to cut down on noise, and consider wearing ear plugs at night, says Wolfgang Babisch, PhD, senior officer at Germany's Federal Environmental Agency. You can remove up to 99.97 percent of harmful air particles in your bedroom with a HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) filter. These are widely available; choose one that can handle the cubic footage of your room. (There are filters that will clean the air in your entire house, but they're considerably

more expensive.) For further information about types and sources of pollution in your area, plug in your zip code at scorecard.org, set up by a nonprofit group that tracks polluters, and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Envirofacts (epa.gov/enviro). For home buyers, environmental disclosure reports are available from a variety of providers, such as Environmental Data Resources (edrnet.com).

■ **THE UPSIDE TO CITY LIVING.**

Urban dwellers can take comfort in the fact that their mean streets also give them plenty of opportunities to improve their health. "People who live in walkable communities have exercise built into their daily life, as opposed to those who are dependent on the automobile," says Andrew Darrell, New York regional

director of the Living Cities program at Environmental Defense, a national nonprofit dedicated to finding solutions to environmental problems. A study in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* found that people living in neighborhoods with a mix of shops and businesses in easy walking distance were 35 percent less likely to be obese.

There's also virtue in a city's social density: "Because people live so close to each other, they tend to develop deeper social networks," says

Darrell. It's hard not to make friends or find supportive individuals when you're so tightly packed, he says.

Ultimately, where you live may be a matter of environmental trade-offs. "If you're near a major road but, in exchange, you're able to walk a lot, you may be getting net benefits for your health," says Levy. —LAUREN DZUBOW

The upside to urban dwelling: People develop deeper social networks.

INVISIBLE MOVE OF THE MONTH

Pain Prevention for Pump Wearers

■ A subtle stretch you can do anytime you're standing will help keep your calves limber and feet pain-free. "Most women who wear high heels will have tightening of the two calf muscles that join the Achilles tendon in the back of the heel," says Jaleh Hoorfar, DPM, a podiatric surgeon at New York-Presbyterian Hospital. That tendon can actually shorten over time, leading to heel pain and difficulty wearing flats. Hoorfar suggests this simple exercise to stretch your Achilles, increase circulation, and improve posture. While standing, shift your weight to your left foot and bend your right knee slightly. Lean back on your straight left leg while simultaneously digging your heel into the ground and pulling your left toes toward your shin. Hold for a few seconds, then return to a normal standing position. Do ten repetitions and then switch legs. Hoorfar recommends continuing the stretch, which will also help prevent varicose veins, for as long as you're standing. And you can do the stretch barefoot, in gym shoes, even in pumps. —RACHEL BERTSCHE



[BODYWISE>204]