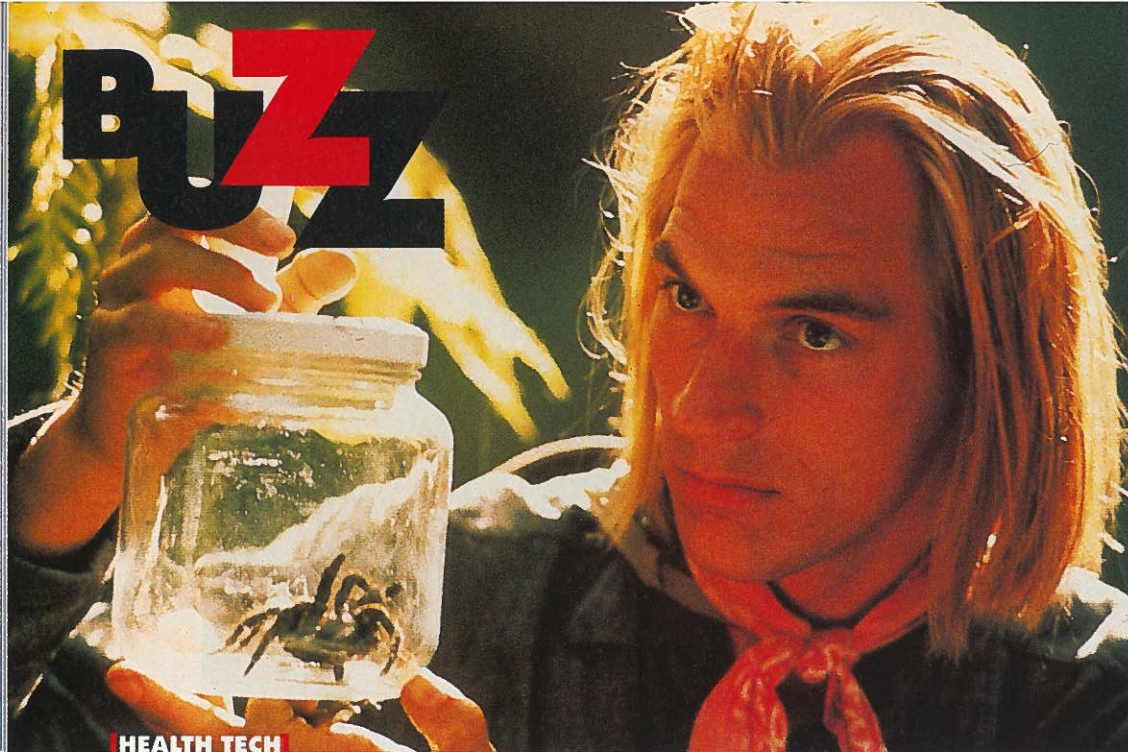


BUZZ



HEALTH TECH

The Itsy Bitsy Tarantula

Arachnophobia cure: Do the crawl with a virtual spider

Scared of spiders, snakes, Amway salesmen? Virtual reality headsets may be the modern cure for the heebie-jeebies. Psychologists say gradual exposure to feared objects is the most effective method for treating phobias. "Virtual reality works well because it gives the therapist and the patient a fair amount of control over the phobic object," says Albert Carlin, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist at the University of Washington Medical Center. Working with HIT Labs in Seattle, Carlin treated patients with a fear of spiders by strapping a VR headset over his clients' eyes. In the virtual world, arachnophobics meet head-on with a big, hairy spider that drops from the ceiling onto their face. After a number of sessions, patients begin to lose their fear. Later, he uses a model of a hairy Guyana bird-eating tarantula to help bridge the visual-to-physical gap. Now, if someone can only come up with a cure for our fear of psychologists.

PERFECT BREASTS

And wings and drumsticks. They can be yours with a little advice from those master basters at Butterball. Once again, the turkey experts will be manning the Butterball Turkey Talk-Line (800-323-4848) through December, serving up hints and tips for cooking the perfect bird. Can't get through? Then jump on Butterball Turkey Online at www.butterball.com for tips, recipes and step-by-step carving instructions. Hot tip: Let it cool before you carve.

New Products the World Can Do Without

■ Talking barbecue spatula (888-422-8810). HotTalk!, "the world's only talking BBQ spatula," says three phrases, including this gut-buster: "Hey, it's getting hot on here. Flip me, flip me!"

■ The Bait Shuttle (www.baitshuttle.com). Designed for use when the bass are just out of casting range, this 18-inch battery-powered boat carries your lure or baited hook and line up to 100 yards offshore, where it promptly waits for a bite ... and waits and waits and waits.

■ The Cracker Whacker (www.crackerwhacker.com). A slotted device with a handle, the patented Cracker Whacker lets you throw a Ritz cracker as far as 60 yards. Why? To feed birds or as an environmentally correct alternative to a clay pigeon for trapshooting.

■ Trojan condom clothing (www.loveandsex.com/trojan/hat.html). Carter-Wallace Inc., the maker of Trojan latex condoms, has licensed its name for use on T-shirts and baseball caps. We have nothing against their condoms, but come on, who's going to wear a cap that says "Magnum, Lubricated"?

THE BEST STUFF



Keep Your Friends in Your Wallet

PDA's are great for some people, and yeah, yeah, they've been shrinking in size in recent years. But the fact of the matter is they still make you look like you're schlepping a GameBoy around in your pocket. So

we're willing to sacrifice some functionality for a sleeker machine, like the new Rex PC Companion from Rolodex and Franklin Electronic Publishers. At about the size of a credit card and the thickness of three Gold Cards, the Rex fits nicely in your wallet. Five buttons let you access names, addresses, phone numbers, an appointment calendar and memos. But

being small comes at a price: You can't directly input data; you must plug the unit into your notebook's PC Card slot and download the data (you can also connect it to a desktop via a docking station that's sold separately for \$40). The Rex-1 holds 750 names (\$130), the Rex-3 2,500 (\$150). Both use an LCD that can show up to nine 30-character lines of text.

