

## SPRING BREAKFAST FORUM

## Weight Loss, Weight Gain: Genetics and the Body-Brain Connection

Date: Thursday, March 13, 2003 Place: Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Hall

The Rockefeller University

Time: 7:30 – 8:00 a.m. Registration & York Avenue at 66th Street

Breakfast Buffet New York City

8:00 – 9:00 a.m. Program

Anyone who has ever tried to gain or lose more than a few pounds knows that controlling body weight is no simple matter. The human body is equipped with an elaborate network of genes and hormones that regulate appetite, fat storage, and energy expenditure. Insulin, discovered in 1921, was the first of these hormones to be identified. The next major breakthrough did not come until 1995, when Jeffrey Friedman discovered a hormone he called leptin — a name derived from the Greek word meaning "thin."

Dr. Friedman and his colleagues were able to identify this new hormone only after a successful eight-year search for the gene that produces it. Made in fat cells, leptin travels through the bloodstream to several sites in the body, including key areas of the brain, where it delivers the message that enough food has been consumed.

At the March 13 *Women & Science* Breakfast Forum, Dr. Friedman will report on how leptin has given scientists around the world an entry point into the complex tangle of genes, hormones, and other factors that govern what, when, and how much we eat.

In addition to leptin's role in controlling appetite and eating behavior, the hormone has been found to influence bone density, physical activity, sex hormone production, the onset of puberty, insulin secretion, and how the body processes fats and glucose. Research spurred by leptin's discovery has opened avenues toward new therapies for obesity, diabetes, and many other disorders, including anorexia, osteoporosis, hypertension, atherosclerosis, and cancer.

## Jeffrey M. Friedman, M.D., Ph.D.

Jeffrey Friedman is the Marilyn M. Simpson Professor at The Rockefeller University and director of its Starr Center for Human Genetics. An alumnus of the Rockefeller Ph.D. program, he has headed the University's Laboratory of Molecular Genetics since 1986, when he also became affiliated with the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. Dr. Friedman is the recipient of many honors, including the Bristol-Myers Squibb Award for distinguished achievement in metabolic research. He was elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 2001.