

Health & wellbeing

Great advice to keep you happy and healthy

I've noticed that I'm not hearing as well as I used to and I'm hoping it's just ear wax. How can I find out?



Peter Sydserff, Audiologist at Hidden Hearing, is here to help.

Your ear canal is cleverly designed to make sure that nothing strays in there by mistake, so sometimes it can be difficult for ear wax to escape.

A build-up of ear wax can cause a small amount of

temporary hearing loss, but the bad news is, probably not as much as you might think. If you do believe that ear wax is the issue, you must get it checked out in case it continues to build, leading to other potential complications.

An audiologist can help by examining your ears and quickly and safely removing this build-up.

For hearing advice or to book a free hearing test visit www.HearstoHealth.co.uk or call 0800 0199 288.



In The News

Benefits Of Coffee

Two cups of coffee a day could be all it takes to keep your brain healthy and your memory sharp into old age.

Researchers in the US found that women over sixty-five who drank two cups a day were 36 per cent more likely to avoid dementia for the next 10 years than women who didn't drink it.

The scientists aren't sure why coffee works so well, but they suspect it could be connected to the fact that caffeine binds to receptors in the brain, thereby offering some sort of protection against cognitive impairment.

If you're not a coffee drinker, rest assured you can get the same dose of brain-protecting caffeine from six cups of strong black tea.



Mind Over Matter

If you want a quick fix stress-busting solution, try adopting an 80/20 mindset. There is an ancient philosophical rule (Pareto Principle) which states that 80 per cent of results tend to come from 20 per cent of the effort. So, instead of trying to be superwoman and giving 100 per cent to absolutely everything (and inevitably falling short) try focusing on the 20 per cent that really matters.

- Pick anything that uses up a lot of your time, cherry-pick the 20 per cent that's really important and aim to do that exceptionally well. For instance, instead of struggling to be the perfect parent, pick the bit (healthy meals or intellectual interaction) that you think makes the biggest impact and specialise in that.

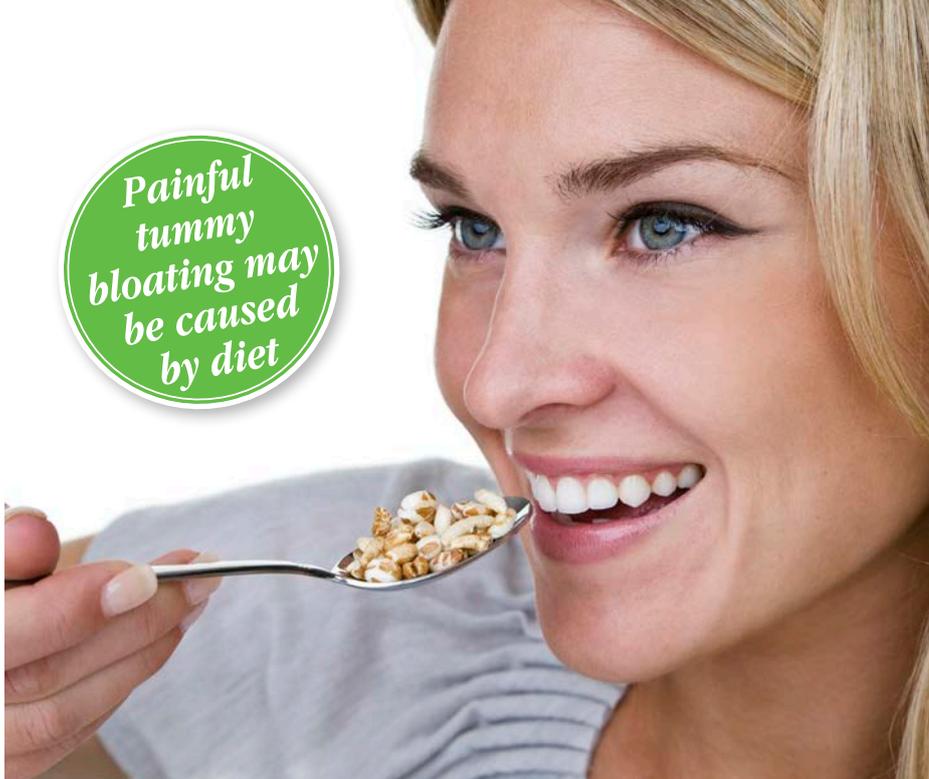
- Now give yourself permission to drop, delegate, look for shortcuts or aim to be "just good enough" rather than perfect with all the rest. This should ensure that you don't spread yourself too thinly and that what you aim to achieve is more attainable.

Health Bite

Rocket was originally cultivated in ancient Rome and these peppery leafy greens are thought to help the liver with its detoxification process and help increase stomach acid, which boosts the digestive process. A powerhouse of nutrition, rocket contains the plant nutrients quercetin and kaempferol, plus beta-carotene (the precursor to vitamin A), vitamin C, vitamin K, iron and B vitamins, including folate (vitamin B9). It is also very high in antioxidants responsible for cancer prevention. It makes sense, then, to add rocket to salads and scatter over rice dishes as a brilliant green garnish before serving.



Painful
tummy
bloating may
be caused
by diet



About Diverticular Disease



Colleen Shannon, our Health Writer, finds out how to try to prevent it.

WE'RE often told it's important to eat plenty of fruit, vegetables and whole grains.

One good reason to follow this advice is a condition called diverticular disease, which is regarded as the most common disorder affecting the digestive system. The medical term "diverticular" refers to little pockets that form in the wall of the bowel.

To learn more, I asked Mr Josef S. Wafah, Consultant General, Emergency, and Laparoscopic Surgeon at Northwick Park and St. Mark's Hospital in London. The hospital is part of the London North West Hospitals Healthcare NHS Trust.

He told me that most of the time, these pockets in the bowel do not cause any problems. In fact, only one in four people with diverticular disease experience symptoms.

But sometimes, instead of moving through the bowel normally, bits of stool can get caught in the pockets.

This may cause a feeling of being bloated, and a tummy ache.

Bleeding from the back passage, a change in bowel habits and a fever are other possible symptoms. Any time you experience these symptoms, it is important to see your GP soon. They might be able to determine the cause, or they could send you to a hospital clinic for some tests.

If the pockets become infected, this is

called diverticulitis. Treatment can include antibiotics, getting extra fluids, painkillers chosen by your doctor, and modifying your diet or resting the gut.

Sometimes it can be managed at home, but some people have to stay in hospital. Fortunately, the need for surgery is rare.

In the most serious cases, the wall of the bowel can burst. This causes severe pain and a fever. Thankfully, this situation is also rare in diverticular disease.

But any time you feel severely ill, with abdominal pain and a fever, you must seek emergency medical attention.

The cause of diverticular disease is not always straightforward. Part of it is to do with getting older. The bowel becomes weaker and stretches out of shape more easily.

The nerves and muscles that regulate the bowel become less effective with age. It is probably also linked to our genes. There is not much we can do about these factors.

Diet is also likely to play a role, and this is where your lifestyle comes in. Eating a healthy diet with plenty of fibre helps to manage diverticular disease and may help to prevent it. If you do not already eat this way, build up your fibre intake gradually.

Being very overweight increases the chance of developing diverticular disease, so staying physically active and keeping a healthy weight are sensible steps.

It's possible that smoking could also increase your risk. So this is just one of many reasons to take good care of yourself by trying to stop if you do smoke.

You can learn more about diverticular disease on the NHS Choices website at www.nhs.uk. When it comes to tummy problems, though, the best thing you can do is talk to your GP, who can find out what's wrong and help you get on course to feeling better. ■

Unravel Your Health History

After the age of forty-five, your risk of heart disease goes up, and although it's a major killer among males, a woman's risk increases significantly after menopause (when the protective effects of oestrogen diminish).

Genetic testing may still be in its infancy, but a good family history can get a closer idea of your true risk. So start asking questions, then inform your GP if:

- your father or a brother had a heart attack before the age of fifty-five
- your mother or a sister had one before the age of sixty-five
- your parents do or did have heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes or a stroke
- if any relatives died young, do you know what the cause was? If not, try to find out.

Beat Bad Breath



When bad breath can't be tamed by ordinary toothbrushing, you might need to call in more powerful reinforcements. The Breath Co range of products contains carbonated crystals which attack and neutralise the "volatile sulphur compounds" that cause bad breath.

The range includes a mouthwash, lozenges and a special toothpaste, but just one piece of the new fresh breath chewing gum could be enough to banish the smell of onions, garlic, coffee and smoking for up to 12 hours. It's available from Boots priced £4 (for 10 pieces of gum).

10 Pieces of Extremely Effective Breath Freshening Gum

The Breath Co.
FRESH BREATH
CHEWING GUM
With Sweeteners

ADVANCED
FORMULA
CRUNCHY
outer shell
CLEANS
CHEWY
middle layer
FIGHTS
ODOUR

Citrus Mint Flavour • With Xylitol • Aspartame Free
Net wt. 17g

Grain Dependent

One reason so many of us find bread, pastry and pasta trigger bloating is because we've become "grain-dependent" on wheat and don't vary our grain sources. Give yourself a break and try buckwheat – it's increasing in popularity right now. This gluten-free grain is packed with nutrients (manganese, copper, magnesium, potassium and fibre) with the added advantage that it is lower GI and won't spike your blood sugar levels like some other grains. Buy it ready made as pasta or noodles (sometimes called soba) or try making your own low-sugar pancakes (delicious!) and muffins from buckwheat flour (£4.99 for 500g from large supermarkets).

The Problem: Swollen Ankles

If you find yourself sitting down for much of the day, you could be prone to swollen ankles and even an increased risk of deep vein thrombosis (blood clots in the lower leg).

If you can, get up and walk around, but if you can't, Jeremy Crane – Consultant Transplant and Vascular Surgeon – recommends frequent under-desk leg exercises (circle your ankles, stretch your calves) and making sure you drink plenty of water.

"Dehydration is a massive contributory factor with DVT," he says.

If you are prone to varicose veins and plan to stand more during the day, try pulling on a pair of compression stockings.

"Well-fitting stockings will support



Eat a wide variety of foods containing potassium to lessen your ankle swelling.

damaged veins, and help stop blood from pooling in the legs – in fact, they can be useful even if you don't have varicose veins," he says.

Health & wellbeing

Great advice to keep you happy and healthy

In The News

For patients at high risk of diabetes, GPs in England will soon prescribe a free course of lifestyle advice and exercise.

This will be provided under a scheme called Healthier You: The NHS Diabetes Programme. It's a joint effort between NHS England, Public Health England and the charity, Diabetes UK. It targets type 2 diabetes, which is linked to obesity (type 1 diabetes is not caused by being overweight, and can't be prevented).

It will be rolled out between now and 2020, when it's expected to reach 100,000 people. Each patient will get personalised advice and an exercise programme suited to their individual needs.

The chief executive of NHS England, Simon Stevens, thinks it will be a good investment. "Around 500 people every day find out they've got type 2 diabetes – a serious but often preventable health condition. By offering targeted support for at-risk individuals, the NHS is now playing our part in the wider campaign against obesity – which is already costing the country more than we spend on the police and fire service combined."

He added, "The benefits for patients will show up as hospitalisations prevented, strokes avoided and amputations averted."

*For Further Information
Find tips for a healthy lifestyle on the NHS Choices website at www.nhs.uk/livewell*

We are unable to offer individual advice to readers. Please see your own GP if you have a medical problem.

Risk factors for type 2 diabetes

- Age – being over forty (over twenty-five for South Asian people)
- Genetics – having a close relative with the condition
- Weight – being overweight or obese
- Ethnicity – being of South Asian, Chinese, African-Caribbean or black African origin (even if you were born in the UK)



Beating Dementia

New figures show we could actually be beating the rise of dementia. Thanks to our increasingly healthy lifestyles, the prevalence of diseases such as Alzheimer's has started to fall – by more than 22% in the last 20 years. When a recent Cambridge University study looked at dementia rates two decades ago, it found 8.3% of over-sixty-fives were affected. However, when the researchers had a fresh look at people in that age bracket now, they found dementia levels had fallen to 6.5%. That's a 22% drop and definitely one worth shouting about!

**Spectacles,
prescriptions,
travel – are
you entitled
to help?**



Colleen Shannon, our Health Writer, investigates ways the NHS can help.

Are you claiming?

ONE of the great things about our health service is getting the care you need, regardless of your ability to pay.

But when you have a long-term health condition, or you're travelling to lots of hospital appointments, some expenses can still add up.

If you know where to look, though, you may be able to get help with some or all of your extra costs.

To learn more, I asked Gill Williams, an expert on benefits at Independent Age. The charity provides free information and advice to older people on a range of issues, including state benefits and accessing NHS services.

She explained that the help available depends on your circumstances, including where you live. While Independent Age only gives advice for people living in England, some of the general principles may be the same across the UK.

Whatever part of Britain you call home, always seek individual advice on what you can claim (you'll find contact details in the next column).

Other key factors are your age, your income, and whether you have a particular ongoing health condition.

As one example, people in England have to pay a charge for prescriptions from a local pharmacy. But those aged over sixty can get all their prescriptions for free. So can people with certain medical

conditions, such as cancer or diabetes.

Some people on a low income, who must attend hospital for treatment, may be able to get help with the cost of these journeys. If you need to travel by taxi, contact the hospital first to ask if they can help.

In England, everyone over the age of sixty can get a free sight test, and people on low incomes can also get help with the cost of glasses or contact lenses. Some people on a low income can get help with the cost of NHS dental care.

If you live in England, the staff at Independent Age can advise you on NHS costs and a range of other state benefits. They also have some useful booklets. Visit their website www.independentage.org or call the friendly, free advice line on 0800 319 6789.

No matter where you live in the UK, you can contact the Health Cost Helpline, which is run by the NHS. Give them a call on 0300 330 1343 or visit the website www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/healthcosts. They can give you information about NHS benefits in England, Wales and Scotland. If you live in Northern Ireland, they can point you towards a reliable source of local information.

Another good place to try is the Citizens Advice website at www.citizensadvice.org.uk. From here, you can go on to find information for your own part of the country.

You can also ask your GP surgery, pharmacy, optometrist, dentist or hospital clinic how to claim. They often have the forms on hand.

If cost is getting in the way of your health, please don't be shy about asking for help. As you can see, there are many people standing by to smooth the way for you.

Ask Our Expert

Q Is there anything I can do to avoid bad breath?



A Bad breath (halitosis) is often a result of poor oral hygiene. The smell is caused by proteins in the mouth being broken down by bacteria, which results in the release of volatile sulphur compounds (VSCs). These unpleasant-smelling gases linger in the mouth and combine with the air that is expelled during breathing and speaking. Using interdental brushes such as TePe, or flossing daily, can help remove bits of debris which may have built up in between your teeth.

These clever brushes are designed with a flexible but strong wire core with optimum filament coverage to make them easy to pass between the teeth, while removing the maximum amount of plaque.

Speak with your dental hygienist or dentist, who will recommend the size(s) you should use.

Dental Hygienist Elaine Tilling is here to help.

Alternative Pain Relief

For decades, paracetamol has been considered the safest form of pain relief for the treatment of osteoarthritis. But experts are now accepting that alternative supplements can help.

Consultant Rheumatologist Dr Rod Hughes and other pain specialists recommend trying a three-month course of a supplement called GOPO. It's named after a key ingredient in the rose-hip plant which, although it is well-used in Scandinavia, has only recently become available in the United Kingdom.

A pack of 120 5g tablets (three-a-day) costs £18.48 from Boots.

An alternative option.

ROSE-HIP WITH VITAMIN C

NEW NAME. ORIGINAL FORMULA

GOPO
JOINT HEALTH



HIGH LEVEL OF KEY COMPOUND GOPO™

Health & *wellbeing*

Great advice to keep you happy and healthy

How can I try to relieve my arthritis pain without taking too many painkillers?



**Lynda Attias
from Arthritis
Care Helpline
is here to
help.**

Managing the pain that comes with living with arthritis is a great concern to many people. One option could be using heat or cold on the painful joint (or a combination of the two). If you are using a hot-water bottle, wrap a towel around it first.

Heat increases blood circulation and can help relieve sore, stiff muscles and joints. A hot bath or shower in the morning and at bedtime can be soothing, too.

If you prefer something cold, ice or frozen vegetables, wrapped in a towel, can help reduce inflammation, relieve pain or numb the sore area. Remember, cold packs should not be applied for more than 10-20 minutes at a time. You could also try a TENS machine. These work by stimulating nerves to release natural endorphins which close the pain barrier – speak to your doctor for advice.

Download Arthritis Care's "Managing Pain" booklet from www.arthritiscare.org.uk or for a free copy, more help or information on arthritis call the free helpline on 0808 800 4050 between Monday to Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. or e-mail helplines@arthritiscare.org.uk.



In The News

Don't Worry!

Worrying about your health could be even worse for you than you think.

New research shows that people who needlessly worry that they might develop a serious illness may actually be boosting their risk of developing heart disease in the process.

It has long been known that anxiety is a risk factor for heart disease, but when investigators followed the long-term health of 7,000 Norwegians, they found the proportion succumbing to heart disease was twice as high among those who displayed health anxiety (as measured by frequent trips to their GP for check-ups) as among those who didn't.

Boost Your Nutrition

There is a growing consensus that we should all be eating fewer starchy carbohydrates and more vegetables to cut harmful insulin response and boost fibre and nutrients in our diet.

It's not hard to combine the two if you spiralise your own vegetables, or experiment with some of the exciting new low-carb vegetable-based pasta, noodles and rice alternatives now available at larger supermarkets and health food stores. Just add these to your weekly shopping list:

- courgetti (from £1)
- butternut squash noodles (from £1)
- cauliflower rice (around £1.99)
- slim pasta (made from konjac flour and oat fibre) (£1.89)
- skinny buckwheat (soba) noodles (£1.99)
- black bean spaghetti (£3.29)
- Seamore seaweed pasta (around £4.99)



Health Bite

Don't hold back if you find yourself sitting next to a Christmas bowl of nuts – particularly Brazil nuts. Although they are high in fat, all nuts contain a mix of monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, which mean they could help lower cholesterol and reduce your risk of heart disease and strokes.

Brazil nuts are a particularly rich source of the mineral selenium, which helps fight free radicals and protects tissue from damage.

Brazil nuts are also a great source of vitamin E (great for the skin), B vitamins, as well as copper, manganese, potassium, calcium, iron, phosphorus and zinc.

As the fats in Brazil nuts can go rancid very quickly, store them in a sealed bag in the fridge to preserve their goodness.



Think ahead when it comes to medication

Have A Healthy Christmas



Colleen Shannon has some tips to help you enjoy the festive season

CHRISTMAS is such a special time of year, and a busy one, too. So if you are keeping a list of things to do, why not add a few simple items that will help you and the family stay well during the festivities?

I've been shopping for ideas, by asking for seasonal tips from some of our friendly health experts.

First up is Sid Dajani, a community pharmacist and a board member for the Royal Pharmaceutical Society.

He says that your local pharmacist can give you advice and treatment for seasonal illnesses like coughs and colds, or if you've over-indulged with food and drink.

They can also give you a flu jab if you still need yours this year.

If your New Year's resolution is to stop smoking, your pharmacist will support you all the way and help you kick the habit.

They can also give you advice on healthy eating to help you shift a few of those Christmas pounds.

Order any prescriptions nice and early, so you have all the medication you need when other health services aren't so readily available.

When you want to talk about any of your medicines, your pharmacist is there to help. And if you are worried about getting out and about when the pavements are icy, you can simply call them on the phone.

Another of our favourite experts, Lucy Harmer, Director of Services at Independent Age, echoes this advice about turning to your pharmacist.

You can also check with your GP surgery ahead of time, so you know who to call when it's closed. If it's an emergency, your hospital A&E Department is always staffed.

Christmas is a good time to check in with your older neighbours and see if they are well. They may welcome a bit of company, or some help with their shopping.

In freezing temperatures you could check their living-room is warm enough to keep well (around 70F/21C). Take them a copy of the free Independent Age guide "Being winter wise" for more ways to stay well in winter (0800 319 6789, independentage.org).

When it comes to Christmas treats, our friends at Diabetes UK want people to enjoy themselves. Clinical Advisor Emma Elvin says that traditional holiday food shouldn't be forbidden.

People with diabetes can enjoy the occasional treat, like a mince-pie or slice of Christmas pudding, as part of a healthy, balanced diet, just like everyone else.

The charity does not recommend foods that are specially labelled "diabetic" – instead, it makes sense to enjoy ordinary festive foods in small amounts, and balance these with healthier recipes and snacks.

You'll find plenty of delicious ideas and recipes on the website at www.diabetes.org.uk

I hope all of these ideas will give you peace of mind and help you get ready to enjoy your celebrations in the best of health. ■

Handy Helper

In cold weather, it's often our hands that feel the effects most, with chafing, splitting and dryness which stubbornly refuses to be calmed by ordinary hand creams.

New Tough Hands is a thick cream which contains ingredients that exfoliate and remove dead skin layers, vitamin E to enhance healing and rehydrate, plus 10 per cent urea, which acts as a natural skin conditioner, maintaining moisture balance and sealing chapped skin.

It has agents which act as a protective coating to shield the skin with a non-greasy barrier, plus an intensive moisturiser and lemon myrtle and tea tree which act as anti-microbial agents to treat minor cuts and infections.

Tough Hands, £8 from Tesco and pharmacies.



It's Good To Switch Off

So many folk find themselves glued to the TV, but it's worth switching off occasionally and going for a bracing walk.

Scientists with the National Cancer Institute in the US spent eight years following almost 250,000 Americans aged between fifty and seventy and found that every hour of TV they watched could potentially shave 22 minutes off their lifespan.

Even those who exercised for an hour a day but who also found time to spend five hours in front of the TV were far more likely to die prematurely than those who restricted their daily viewing.



What's-his-name?

One of the most frustrating impacts of any "senior moment" is forgetting someone's name. But you can reduce the chances of this happening by just following a few simple rules when you next meet someone new.

Ask their name and repeat it out loud, even checking the spelling with them.

If it's an unusual name, ask them what it means, because the more you talk about the name and repeat it out loud, the more likely you are to find a way to associate the name with a feature in their face, which will then lodge it in your memory.

It's also good to make a very quick comedy association, such as Bill = duck bill (not out loud, though!) and this will also help become a cue at a later date.

Don't worry if you do forget a name, however, as from that point you will associate their name with the embarrassment of forgetting – this in itself will help you remember next time!

Health Bite

This Middle Eastern fruit with its tough exterior and tiny red jewel-like seeds is becoming increasingly popular as a pretty addition to salads and desserts, but scientists now believe the pomegranate could contain a "miracle" ingredient which can strengthen ageing muscles and even extend life.

Pomegranate appears to be able to keep the tiny battery packs which power our cells (mitochondria) charged up, and slows the process of them naturally running down with age.

It seems special plant chemicals contained in pomegranates are turned into a compound called urolithin A by the bugs that live in our gut, and this compound helps the body recycle these drained battery packs, recharging cells and holding ageing at bay.

Pomegranates are already credited with a host of other health benefits, including lowering blood pressure and strengthening bones. Their harvest season starts in October, but if you find them fiddly to eat, look out for pre-shelled packs for around £1.

Pomegranates pack a nutritional punch.



Health & wellbeing

Great advice to keep you happy and healthy

In The News

If you need an excuse for a few minutes in bed while the man in your life puts the kettle on for a morning cup of tea, this might be it: a team of Dutch researchers have found that extra sleep cuts a woman's risk of diabetes, but the opposite

is true for men. They found that women who slept longer than average (which is seven hours and 18 minutes precisely) were better at using the hormone insulin which metabolises blood sugar. The longer they slept, the more responsive they were to the hormone, suggesting that their risk of diabetes was reduced. However, the results were very different in the men. Sleeping more than average appeared to cut men's ability to use insulin, putting them at greater risk of diabetes. The researchers don't yet know why this is, but it might be worth mentioning the next time you fancy a few more minutes of shut-eye!



iStock

We are unable to offer individual advice to readers. Please see your own GP if you have a medical problem.

Muscle Massage

When muscle or joint pain strikes, there's nothing like a soothing massage, and although any massage oil will enable you to work effectively on areas of stiffness, sometimes active ingredients can boost the effect.

Pernaton Gel Forte contains Perna extract sourced from green-lipped mussels and omega-3 fatty acids, which both have anti-inflammatory and joint-protecting properties, while cayenne pepper extract gently heats the skin, supporting circulation to the affected area.

The gel is available from independent pharmacies, around £11.95.



Ask Our Expert

Q I seem to have a problem with ingrowing toenails. I have had them treated before but it always seems to recur. Is there anything I can do to try to prevent this happening again?



*Sarah Walton,
Cosyfeet podiatrist
– www.cosyfeet.com
– is here to help.*

A Most ingrowing toenails are caused by incorrect nail-cutting technique, such as cutting the nail too short at the sides, or pressure from narrow shoes. However, if you've followed the advice of a podiatrist previously and the problem hasn't resolved, it may be that the shape of your nails is predisposing them to becoming ingrown, for example, excessive curvature of the nail plates. In that case, the best option would be to ask your podiatrist about having nail surgery, a procedure to remove the offending sides of the nail permanently.

Regular visits to an optometrist are really important

Family history is important, too. If you have a parent, brother, sister or child with glaucoma, you have a higher chance of developing this condition yourself.

People from an African-Caribbean ethnic background are more likely to develop glaucoma, and it might happen at an early age and come on more suddenly. People from an East Asian ethnic background also have a higher risk of glaucoma.

Being short-sighted or long-sighted, having diabetes or taking steroid tablets or eye drops for a long time are other reasons to be vigilant.

Glaucoma often comes on so gradually that you don't notice. It first affects your side vision, and moves in gradually to the centre.

There is one rare type of glaucoma that causes a sudden rise in eye pressure, with intense pain and sight loss. As with any sudden onset of eye pain or sight loss, you must get emergency care from a doctor.

Generally, glaucoma is detected during a routine eye check. Your optometrist should examine your eye and check the pressure, usually with a test using a puff of air. If the pressure is too high, your optometrist will refer you to hospital so a specialist doctor can follow up.

Most of the time, glaucoma can be treated with eye drops. If this does not work or is not right for you, tablets, laser treatment and surgery are also used to treat glaucoma. These treatments can't reverse damage that has already happened, but they can protect the vision you still have.

If you, or someone you know, has glaucoma or any other sight problem, RNIB can help. Call the RNIB Helpline on 0303 123 9999 or visit www.rnib.org.uk ■



Colleen Shannon, our Health Writer, talks about eye care

Catch Glaucoma Early

D ID you know that most of us should have an eye check-up with an optometrist every two years?

One of the reasons is to look for signs of glaucoma, a condition that is responsible for one in 10 cases of sight loss. There are 500,000 people in England and Wales diagnosed with glaucoma, but because it does not always cause symptoms, many people may not know they have it.

Our eyes are filled with fluid, which is continually replenished. It drains away through little tubes in the eye. When this drainage system doesn't work properly, the fluid builds up and damages the optic nerve which carries visual signals to the brain.

The good news is that straightforward treatments can stop further damage to the eye. That's why early detection and those regular check-ups are so important.

To hear more about glaucoma, I talked to Matthew Athey, Eye Health Information Service Manager at the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB).

While glaucoma can happen to anyone, he explained that some people have a higher risk of developing this condition. It is more common as we get older, affecting two in 100 people over the age of forty and rising to almost 10 in 100 people over the age of seventy-five.

Savour The Flavour

Meditation can be hugely beneficial to your health, with "mindful" eating now being encouraged to improve digestion. Try this:

- **Sit down at a table free from all distractions – no radio, TV, mobile phone or chattering children (this latter one may be outwith your control!)**
- **Wait 10 seconds before putting anything in your mouth. Instead, look intently at your food and notice the different colours and smells on your plate**
- **Switch your knife and fork into the "wrong" hands and scoop up your first mouthful (you can use chopsticks instead if you think it will slow things down further)**
- **Put the fork down and really savour the food rather than swallowing it quickly**
- **Chew slowly and methodically – at least 20 times**
- **Repeat the process with each bite, then after 10 bites stop, put down your fork and check your hunger and fullness signals – do you need to eat any more?**

Health & wellbeing

Great advice to keep you happy and healthy

Q. I suffer from dry eyes and so wearing contact lenses during the day is not an option for me, but I really don't like wearing glasses. Surgery seems a radical step – are there any other options?



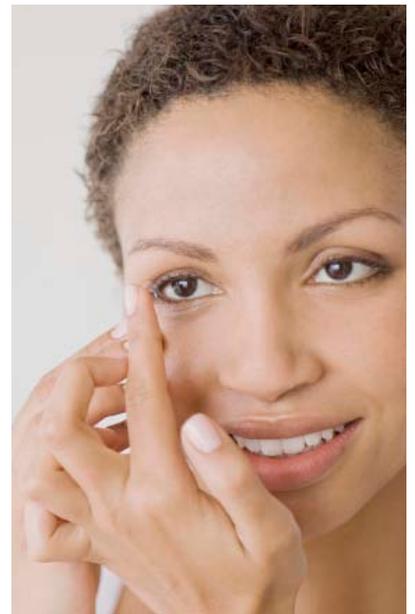
Katie Harrop, an Optometrist and Professional Services Manager at No7 Contact Lenses and a specialist in Orthokeratology, is here to help.

If you're short sighted there is another option. Orthokeratology lenses are worn overnight and removed in the morning, and are suitable for youngsters from six or seven through to people in their

eighties. These bespoke lenses – made to suit your individual prescription – gently change the shape of your eyes so that you focus properly when they're removed.

A lot of contact lens dryness is caused by air conditioning and other environmental factors. Because your eyes are closed when you're sleeping, the Orthokeratology lenses aren't affected by dryness.

These lenses do not make a permanent change to your eyes as surgery will. Find your local optician specialist at www.orthoklenses.com.



In The News

Steps To End Arguments

If disputes with your children or grandchildren are driving you to despair, don't argue – suggest a short walk together instead.

Researchers at the University of Illinois have just published a study which shows that a bit of fresh air can reduce mental fatigue and restore what they call "attentional functioning".

Lead researcher Dina Izenstark says, "When your attention is restored you are able to pick up on social cues more easily, you feel less irritable, and you have more self-control – all of which can help you get along better with others."

Communication problems can arise if you spend too much time focusing on computer games, and TV. The natural world fosters "soft fascination", which can restore attention levels – and create family harmony.

Tingling Fingers

If you ever suffer from pins and needles in your hands that may signify repetitive strain injury, try these simple exercises from physiotherapist Steven Berkman of www.BoostPhysio.com.

- Sit up tall – slouching puts immense strain on the neck, which can trap the important nerves which travel down to the hands

- **If you're working at a laptop or computer, ensure your seat height is adjusted so your forearms are parallel to the floor to minimise strain on the shoulders**

- Extend your arms, make fists, then flex the wrists to the floor. Hold for 20 seconds and repeat three times. Do this three to five times a day

- **Put your palms together in front of your chest, flattening your palms together, keeping your fingers straight, then slowly turn your fingers in to point your fingertips to your chest until you feel a stretch. Hold for 20 seconds and repeat three times**



Health Bite

Add as much garlic to your meals as you can because it is packed with health-giving nutrients and could help protect you against high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, high cholesterol, colds and even some cancers.

Each tiny bulb is packed with vitamins C and B6, as well as the minerals manganese and selenium, and a decent dose of calcium, copper, potassium, iron and vitamin B1. Like onions and leeks, garlic is rich in an antioxidant called allicin which has antibacterial, antifungal and antiviral properties – but these are only released if you crush or chop the garlic when it is raw.

The minimum dose for therapeutic effect is one clove eaten with meals two or three times a day, but if you are taking blood-thinning medications, talk to your GP before dramatically increasing garlic consumption.



Help is on hand for those who need it

Coping With Anxiety



Colleen Shannon, our health writer, talks to an expert at Mind

WE all have anxious times in our lives. Remember when you were worried about sitting exams at school, or going to your first job interview? Maybe you felt your heart racing, had butterflies in your stomach, or broke into a sweat.

But for some people, anxiety becomes a regular experience. It gets in the way of normal life and takes over.

This situation is more common than you might think. In any given year, about one in twenty people will experience this kind of anxiety. The good news is that if you have anxiety, help is out there.

To learn more, I asked Stephen Buckley, Head of Information at the mental health charity Mind. He explained that anxiety might be a problem if your feelings of worry or fear persist for a long time, or if you get anxious about everyday situations like going to work or meeting friends.

Anxiety can become overwhelming, blotting out everything else in your life.

Anxiety affects the body as well as the mind, and symptoms can include a fast heart rate, muscle tension, dizziness, feeling breathless, sweating, shaking and feeling sick.

On the emotional side, you might feel nervous and tense all the time. Your mind might keep going over a worrying situation again and again.

It might feel like you are always running or escaping, or you might constantly think

about ways to avoid anxious situations. Some people may even get panic attacks.

Behaviour can also give clues about anxiety. Drinking more alcohol, having sleepless nights and avoiding people could all be signs.

If you feel that anxiety is getting in the way of your normal life, this is the time to ask for help. Many people put this off, thinking they are just “under stress”.

Talking to your GP or practice nurse is the first step. They probably see many patients with anxiety, so don't feel embarrassed. Mind has an online guide to help you get ready for your appointment at www.mind.org.uk/findthewords.

Your doctor might prescribe medication. It's not the right choice for everyone, but sometimes drug treatment can be effective. They might recommend taking treatments such as counselling, exercise, arts therapy and outdoor activities.

In addition to exercise and getting outdoors, a healthy diet can also help. Getting enough sleep is vital, and since this is often a problem for people with anxiety, your GP may be able to help you.

You can also take common-sense steps like switching off the TV, computers and smartphones well before bedtime, and keeping your bedroom a calm and relaxing place.

Mindfulness is another approach. It means paying attention to what's happening and how you are feeling in the moment, instead of worrying about the past or the future.

You'll find more information about anxiety on the Mind website at www.mind.org.uk or phone their helpline on 0300 123 3393. They can also put you in touch with local and online support groups, where you can talk to others who understand. ■

Benefits Off The Scale!

Science shows that fish oils can boost brain power in children and can keep us mentally sharp as we get older – they could even help stall dementia. Studies have shown that women who consume higher levels of omega-3 fatty acids show greater volume in the part of the brain which is important for memory.

If you're not a big fan of oily fish like salmon or mackerel, however, then 3g of omega-3 fish oil daily for five weeks could be enough to boost your memory and protect your brain power.

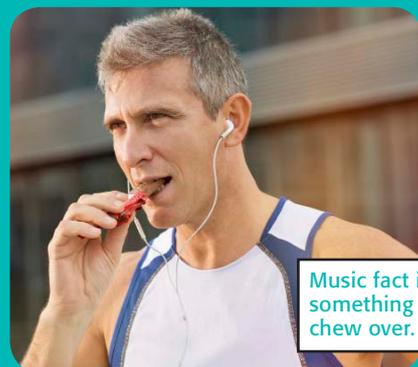
Equazen Mind 50+ includes a combination of omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids, B vitamins, zinc and magnesium. Priced £15.99 for 30 capsules from Holland & Barrett and independent pharmacies.



Orchestrate Dining Habits

US studies dating back to the 1980s show people who listen to fast music tend to eat around five bites per minute, while slow music causes the eating pace to dwindle to a more healthy three bites per minute.

Proper chewing – and slow eating – allows the gradual release of digestive enzymes, reducing the risk of digestive disorders such as indigestion. Recent research from Texas University showed that overweight men and women took in fewer calories when they slowed their normal eating pace, and reported lower hunger and increased fullness ratings.



Music fact is something to chew over.