

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

STAR LETTER

Little red spots drive me mad

Can you tell me what causes little spots which are itchy, red and hurt? I've got them on my face, arms and shoulders and it's starting to drive me to distraction.

Itching and redness means an allergy or inflammation. You could be allergic to something you eat, a medicine you take or even something your skin is in contact with, like a perfumed soap or biological washing powder. It's also possible the spots come from within due to a blood or liver disorder. Your doctor needs to take a look and do some simple tests to reach a proper diagnosis and that way you'll get the treatment you need.

Hair loss

I have suffered twice with alopecia, once when I was 13 and once in my early 30s. The first time, my hair grew back within a couple of years but the second time it didn't. Shortly after, I was given a cortisone injection for a back problem – and my hair grew back. After about three months, it fell out again. Can I buy cortisone over the counter?

Sudden loss of hair in clumps is known as alopecia areata. You make antibodies to your own hair follicles so your immune system destroys them and makes you bald. Cortisone is a kind of steroid which suppresses your immune system and stops this. Long-term use would cause side effects but a one-off series of injections into your scalp could be beneficial.

Itchy testicles

For the past few months I have had terrible itching on my testicles and, even worse, around my bottom. What can I use to help?

The most likely cause is tinea

cruris – a fungal skin infection which frequently leads to itching around your groin, scrotum and bottom. Try creams such as Canestan HC or Daktacort from the chemist and use them for at least a fortnight after any irritation appears to clear up.

Blood woe

My 24-year-old son has been passing blood through his urine and from his back passage. He has stomach pains too. We have Crohn's disease, cancer and IBS in the family and I'm starting to worry. He's been to A&E and they just gave him painkillers, as did his GP. What can we do?

A urine test can screen for infection and persistent bleeding from a kidney stone, for example, while a quick check can see whether your son has haemorrhoids which may be bleeding. But he might need additional investigations such as a colonoscopy so doctors can rule out anything more serious. A good GP should allay your worries.

Sexual healing



Eyes on the box

My wife loves to watch lesbian porn while we are making love. She says she's never had a same-sex experience and never wants one. Should I believe her?

The visual cues which turn people on are not necessarily images of sexual behaviour which they enjoy themselves. Sometimes what makes pornography erotic is the fact that it is out of the ordinary. Your wife could be latently bisexual or fibbing, but it seems unlikely since you are the one she enjoys having sex with.

SORRY, DR HILARY CANNOT REPLY TO INDIVIDUAL LETTERS

DID YOU KNOW ...

- "Water on the knee" (housemaid's or parson's knee) is a result of prolonged kneeling, which irritates a protective pocket of fluid just below the kneecap.
- Clicking or giving way when

Body part of the week

The knee

As you come down stairs are two common symptoms of a cartilage tear.

■ The knee is the commonest joint of all to be affected by osteoarthritis.

■ 60 per cent of all internal ligament (cruciate) injuries are seen in footballers, such as Michael Owen.



Lola Baker, 45, is a PA from Selsdon, Surrey, who suddenly had pains in her knees.

YOU try it!

...but does it work?

A lubricating aid to beat arthritis

"I do aerobics regularly, so it was a shock when I got this sharp pain in my knees as I was doing a bit of DIY. The left knee was quite swollen and an X-ray showed that I had osteoarthritis. I thought that was an old person's illness. A friend said that she took Lubramine for her joints, so I started taking just one capsule a day. The swelling went down after about three weeks. I've continued to take the treatment as it helps lubricate the joint.**"**

Lubramine, £9.95 for 30 capsules, is available from Boots and Superdrug, or call 0800 074 7404.



DIY DOC

A quick route to self-diagnosis

Why can't I lose weight?

