

Mind, body & soul HEALTH ADVICE

Dr SARAH'S surgery



DR SARAH BREWER is a GP with a special interest in nutrition and complementary and herbal medicines

This month, advice on diabetes, high blood pressure and managing pain

NATURAL AID FOR HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

Q *I have raised blood pressure. I'm trying to bring it down naturally with a healthy diet and lifestyle. Can any supplements help?*

A Dietary measures – such as reducing salt and eating more fruit, vegetables and fish, while also cutting back on refined carbohydrates – can be very effective in controlling blood pressure when combined with regular daily exercise. But supplements can certainly help. I usually recommend black garlic (2000mg daily), which has significantly less odour than normal garlic, and coenzyme Q10 (100mg daily, in the form of body-ready ubiquinol), alongside an omega-3 fish oil supplement (1g daily). Supplements are available from Boots, health-food stores, www.healthspan.co.uk and www.nutricentre.com.

DISCREET GLUCOSE MONITORING

Q *I have diabetes and work in an open-plan office. It's embarrassing having to lay all my glucose-monitoring kit on my desk, so I don't check as often as I should. Surely someone can come up with a simpler system.*

A I can suggest a couple of options. If you have a smart phone, the iBGStar (£48 from Boots) is a tiny glucose meter that turns your iPhone or iPod into a glucose monitor. With its Diabetes Manager App you can check your blood glucose levels on the go. Or try the **Mendor Discreet** all-in-one monitor, which contains meter, lancing device and a cartridge of 25 strips in one unit. It's available free from your diabetes nurse or at www.mendordiscreet.co.uk. Replacement strips are available on prescription.

HOW CAN I TACKLE MY PAIN

Q *I get pain most days in different parts of my body. All my tests are normal and doctors can't explain it. It's not bad enough to stop work, but I'd love to get on top of it without the need for daily painkillers.*

A Surveys suggest that over half of people in the UK experience pain at least once a week, and one in four have pain every single day. Yet many people live with daily discomfort because they don't want to bother their GP or don't believe anything can help. Do ask your doctor to refer you to a specialist or a pain clinic if he or she can't find a diagnosis. Lloyds Pharmacy also has a free service to help you manage pain and reduce the impact it has on your life. Next time you pick up your prescription, ask the pharmacist for a confidential consultation to work out your personal pain-management goals, and ensure your medication is effective. To find your nearest pharmacy, visit www.lloydspharmacy.com/storelocator.

IS THIS SIDE EFFECT NORMAL?

Q *I've started magnesium supplements (375mg at night) to help me sleep. They work really well, but I have loose bowels several times a day. Is this related?*

A Magnesium sulphate is the main component of Epsom salts,



which was a popular laxative in Victorian times. Magnesium in high doses is also used medically to clear the bowel before procedures such as colonoscopy and surgery. But the amount you are taking is the EU recommended daily amount (RDA), and a risk assessment on magnesium found that doses below 400mg a day are not expected to cause any significant adverse effects. Some people are more sensitive to the laxative effects of magnesium than others, but if the change in bowel habit continues, especially after stopping the supplements, it's important to see your GP to rule out other causes.

Case history

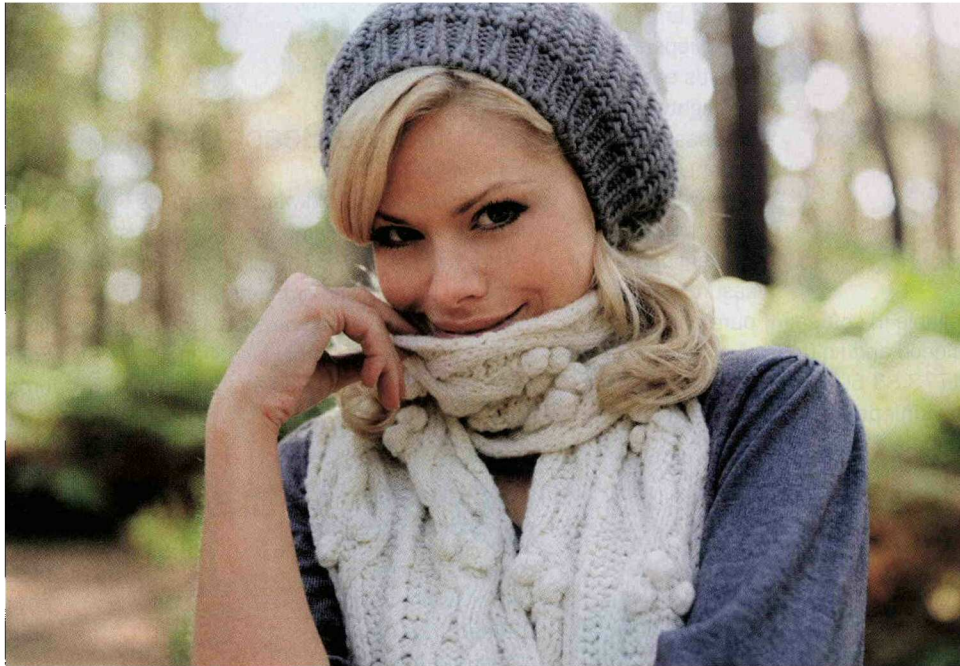
Alice, 44, was worried when her husband, Terry, 48, became uninterested in sex

It wasn't that he couldn't perform – he just didn't want to. I urged him go to the doctor, where tests revealed a lack of testosterone. Within three weeks of using a testosterone gel, he was a different man,' says Alice.

Testosterone deficiency affects as many as one in eight men over 40. Untreated, it increases the risk of developing type 2 diabetes, heart attack and stroke. As well as improving energy levels, sleep quality and mood, a course of testosterone replacement therapy can aid glucose control, cholesterol balance and bone strength, and help sufferers lose weight.



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