

Health & WELLBEING

Great advice to keep you happy and healthy.

TOP news Sight Saviour

An exciting new drug treatment is being trailed to help protect people with diabetes from sight loss. Diabetic retinal disease is a common complication with diabetes, and the hunt is on for drugs which can target early damage to the eye before it becomes irreversible. In animal tests, one drug, 2-HDP has been shown to protect the retina from damage and researchers are hopeful that it could offer a potential new way to slow or prevent vision worsening in people living with diabetes.

Ace Acupuncture

New research from the British Acupuncture Council shows increasing numbers are seeking treatment with acupuncture for mental health issues, particularly anxiety and depression.

Encouragingly, 95.5% of the acupuncturists in the survey reported that patients experienced positive results which, the researchers say, demonstrates the effectiveness of acupuncture in helping people to manage anxiety, making a positive impact on their mental health and quality of life.

Ask your GP if acupuncture is available on the NHS in your area.



PLANTAR FASCIITIS

Our health writer Jackie Mitchell advises on this foot issue.

PLANTAR fasciitis, also known as plantar fasciopathy, is the most common type of heel pain. It is caused by damage to the fascia band (similar to a ligament), which runs along the sole of the foot, connecting the heel bone to the base of the toes.

It causes a stabbing pain in the bottom of your foot near the heel and can affect both feet at the same time.

The pain is normally worse first thing in the morning, although it can be triggered by long periods of standing or when you get up from sitting.

Emma McConnachie is a podiatrist from the Royal College of Podiatry.

"Pain in the inside part of the heel will be worse in the morning and gets better on moving, only to be sore again after resting," she explains.

"The pain usually occurs in the inside part of the heel near the arch and can shoot up towards the toes, too."

The condition can be caused in various ways. These include extensive running, walking or standing for long periods of time, especially if you follow a sedentary lifestyle.

"In particular, poor shoe support, being overweight or the sudden stretching of the sole as well as a tight Achilles tendon are all causes.

"If you're a runner, a change of surface such as from grass to road, can cause it," Emma adds.

To relieve the pain, rest the foot by raising it on a stool when you can.

Apply an ice pack on the painful area and wear shoes with cushioned heels and adequate arch support.

If pain lasts for two weeks or more, seek advice from a GP or podiatrist. "Only a trained professional should diagnose the condition.

"This is done through a detailed history of the symptoms, what makes it worse or better and a physical examination of the affected area.

"In complex cases, an ultrasound scan of the heel may be carried out." If you are experiencing discomfort, do seek the advice of a professional.

"Often we see patients who have spent a lot of money on gadgets online or new shoes through self-research and these have proved to be ineffective and a waste of money."

Treatment includes resting the foot and avoiding long walks or standing for longer periods.

Make sure your shoes have support in the arch and a small heel.

"Once the acute pain has settled, a programme of gentle exercises will be introduced to improve strength in the foot," Emma says. "Ice packs and anti-inflammatory medication can also help as well as manual therapy, strapping, shockwave therapy, steroid injections and in some cases, surgery."

Do follow the advice you are given, especially the exercises.

"There is no quick fix. Avoid walking barefoot around the house, wearing backless shoes and very flexible shoes that bend in the middle of the sole.

"All these will be detrimental to your recovery," Emma says. **PT**

Visit rcpod.org.uk for more information.



WE RECOMMEND . . .

You can enjoy the dual benefits of reflexology and soft feet by applying a set of detox foot patches to the soles of your feet at night. Overnight detox foot patches are a clever idea which incorporate aromatherapy and Traditional Chinese medicine. Each self-adhesive patch is infused with bamboo vinegar, tourmaline crystals and lavender oil which can detoxify and boost circulation while you sleep. Lining the patch up with key reflexology zones could help balance your whole body.

• Good for the Sole Overnight Detox Foot Patches £8.00 for 5 pairs from www.boots.com.



Carefully Choose Crisps

Crisps get a bad press for being an unhealthy source of artificial additives, seed oils and salt, but if you can't resist the crunch of a good crisp, the good news is some are healthier than others.

The key is avoiding highly processed varieties with long lists of chemical ingredients and picking a pack with a short list of easily identifiable ingredients (ideally just potatoes, olive oil and salt) and minimal processing. A thinly sliced, lightly salted fried potato is a healthier snack than a foamy mulch dusted in bright orange powder.

ASK AN EXPERT...



Dr Janine David is a GP, women's health expert and advisor to Effercitrate tablets on www.effercitrate.co.uk.

Q: What simple daily habits can help me avoid getting cystitis in the first place?

A: Cystitis, a urinary tract infection (UTI), is caused by a bacterial infection of the urinary bladder. Symptoms include pain and burning on passing urine, having to pass more urine than usual and having an urge to pee.

A high temperature, lower stomach pain and the passage of dark, cloudy, strong-smelling urine may occur.

To help prevent cystitis, always wipe front to back to stop bacteria moving from the bowel to the bladder.

Don't delay the urge to pee – this can cause bacterial growth. Empty your bladder and leaning back rather than forwards when you pee is thought to help the passage of bacteria.

Don't use harsh soaps, bubble baths, talc and feminine wipes as these can disrupt the bacterial balance in the urinary tract. Diet also impacts, so avoid spices, alcohol and processed food.

Effercitrate effervescent tablets can ease symptoms as they contain potassium citrate. This helps make the urine more alkaline, soothing the bladder and urethra lining and relieving the discomfort caused by the infection.

They are available without a prescription from pharmacies nationwide. Consult your GP if the symptoms are severe, last for longer than a few days or if you pass blood in the urine.

Dry Lips

Chapped lips are a common inconvenience during winter months, but Danielle Louise from wellness platform, www.fresha.com says our daily habits can make things worse.

Don't:

- Constantly lick or rub your lips.
- Use heavy or waxy lip balms that block moisture instead of helping it absorb.
- Using multiple lip products without allowing them to sink in.

Do:

- Sip water throughout the day to hydrate from the inside out.
- Layer products properly, applying a serum or oil before a lip balm.
- Use a SPF as UV rays can still cause dryness even in winter.
- Sleep with a rich moisturiser on your lips to help repair the skin barrier while your rest.