



DR MARK PORTER'S
HERE TO ANSWER YOUR
HEALTH WORRIES

CAN I STRAIGHTEN MY SMILE?

Two of my front teeth are crooked and I would love to have them straightened to give me a better smile. At 28, have I left it too late?

Beattie, Wolverhampton

No, it's not too late. Orthodontic braces are the best way to straighten wayward teeth in children, and they can be just as effective in adults - Tom Cruise's gleaming smile being a perfect example. It is sometimes possible to have your teeth straightened on the NHS, but only for medical rather than cosmetic reasons. To find out if you are eligible, visit your local NHS dentist. If you are not eligible they will be able to recommend a good orthodontist, but you will need patience and deep pockets. A typical course of treatment lasts at least 18 months and costs £1,500 - £2,500.

I HATE MY VEINY LEGS

Is there anything that can be done to stop varicose veins developing? I have a small one just below my knee - it's not too noticeable, but I don't want it to get bigger!

Sue, by email

Varicose veins are caused by faulty valves in the leg veins, and may run in families. It's thought that the genetic glitch responsible for the weakened valves is passed from parent to child. They are most common in people over 30, and invariably get worse as you get older. You should avoid prolonged standing, sit with your legs up when relaxing in the evening, and consider wearing below-the-knee support stockings (ask your pharmacist) whenever you can.

SHOULD I BE WORRIED ABOUT CHICKENPOX?

I am pregnant and a colleague has been ill with chickenpox. Should I be worried about catching it?

Abby, email

You can only catch chickenpox if you haven't had it in the past. If you're not immune though, it can cause serious problems for both mum and baby - including life-threatening pneumonia and brain damage. If a non-immune woman comes in to contact with someone who is suffering from chickenpox (or shingles), she should seek immediate advice from her GP. People with chickenpox are contagious from up to three weeks before the rash appears, until their spots have crusted over. There are medicines to protect mother and baby, and the sooner they are given the better.

IS THERE AN ALTERNATIVE?

PRICKLY HEAT PAIN

I am going on holiday with my boyfriend for the first time this summer but I'm paranoid as I get heat rash. Last summer, I had red, itchy skin but I don't want to use antihistamines.

Apply Urtica Urens cream to the affected area regularly. Also take Nelson's "Sun Exposure" pills, a homeopathic remedy that desensitises you to the sun. Both are available from Nelsons. (www.nelsonspharmacy.com)
Maria Lydaki, homeopath



My best friend is drinking too much

DR MARK'S
BURNING
QUESTION

I am worried by the amount one of my friends is drinking.

Whenever we go out, she gets legless and ends up sleeping with strangers - even when she has to work the next day. What should I do?

Amanda, by email

Problem drinkers often get annoyed when their drinking habits are criticised, but that shouldn't stop you from sharing your concerns with your friend. One in six women admit to having unsafe sex after drinking too much. And one in 10 admit there have been times when they've been so drunk they can't even remember if they had sex, let alone whether it was safe. The Portman Group have launched a national campaign warning women that drink can get them into a number of dangerous situations. Why not use the campaign to raise your concerns with your friend? You are only pointing out the obvious and, by saying nothing, you could be unwittingly encouraging her to carry on as she is. Call Drinkline on 0800 917 8262 for more free and confidential advice.

TRIED & TESTED Protective sun creams

Nourella Sun Sense 20 £12.95
(www.lifes2good.com)

This single-application fragrance-free lotion has an SPF 20 that gives day-long protection both in and out of water.

Agera SPF 25 Moisturizer £28
(www.theskinclinics.com)

An easy-to-apply waterproof cream that is fragrance-free and sinks in quickly. Good for damaged skin and year-round use.

Delph Sun Block 30 £5.99
(01235 838590)

Great value for money, but the thick consistency makes it hard to absorb. The block does, however, provide excellent waterproof protection for sensitive and delicate skins.

RATING: 5/5



AGEPIA

SPF 25 MOISTURIZER

RATING: 4/5



RATING: 4/5

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Something on your mind? Send your health questions to Dr Mark Porter at closerdoc@emap.com