



# dear dr mark



DR MARK PORTER'S  
HERE TO ANSWER YOUR  
HEALTH WORRIES

## NIGHT MADNESS

A strange thing happened to me last weekend. I went to bed as normal on Friday night, but woke up in my back garden in the early hours of Saturday morning. I was naked and covered in scratches. I'm 32, had not been drinking and am not taking any medication. Am I going mad?

Sarah, by email

This sounds like a classic case of sleepwalking. It's not common in adults and little is known about it. We do know that it can be genetic so it often runs in families and it can be triggered by stress, emotional upset, or disruptions to a person's normal sleep routine (such as shift work). Injuries to sleepwalkers are more common in adults than children - one in five adult sleepwalkers say they have woken up with unexplained scratches or bruises. If this is the first time it's happened to you in 32 years, don't worry - it may never happen again. Other than locking all your doors at night, there is not much else you can do. But you might want to consider wearing pyjamas!

## HOW CAN I TREAT MY INDIGESTION?

What is the most effective over-the-counter remedy or treatment for indigestion?

Phillip, Gateshead

For rapid relief of occasional attacks, try a simple antacid tablet or liquid (such as Rennie or Gaviscon). If you are having regular attacks, then nothing is more effective than the acid-suppressing medicine omeprazole, which is now available (in low

doses) without prescription. Ask your pharmacist for more details.

## HOW GOOD ARE ALLERGY TESTS?

I think I may have an allergy to something I'm eating. Are the mail-order allergy tests you see advertised in magazines worth the money?

Bel, by email

Allergy testing is big business, but many of the techniques used are useless. At best they don't work very well, and at worst they are based on complete quackery. There are three gold-standard tests for picking up allergies - RAST blood tests, skin prick tests and patch tests (for contact dermatitis and eczema). All are available on the NHS where appropriate. The RAST test is the only one suitable for mail-order, but I have yet to come across a company that offers it.

## What's the alternative?

### ADULT ACNE

I am 32 years old but still have spots on my face. I am really embarrassed about it, but I don't want to take a course of antibiotics to solve the problem. Can you suggest anything else I could try?

Rachel, by email

Liquefy a cabbage in a food processor. Add a couple of drops of witch hazel. Strain the liquid and add two drops of lemon oil. Apply to your face nightly, as a lotion.



DR MARK'S  
BURNING  
QUESTION

## He's got a lump

I've noticed a lump in one of my partner's testicles. He refuses to discuss it, insisting he is fine. We've been together for nearly five years and I have never felt it before. What should I do?

Alice, Derby

This is a sensitive issue, so sit down with your partner and tell him calmly how concerned you are. There are a number of reasons why you felt a lump and cancer is the least likely - of the 270,000 new cases of cancer diagnosed every year in the UK, only 1,400 are testicular cancer. The first sign of cancer is usually a pea-sized hard lump, which sometimes causes swelling or discomfort. Sadly, by the time most men notice a problem, the cancer has spread. The Keep Your Eye On The Ball campaign aims to encourage men to check themselves regularly and seek help earlier. Men should check their testicles every couple of months - usually after a hot bath or shower - and report any changes to their doctor. For more information and tips on self-examination, visit [www.icrac.uk/everyman](http://www.icrac.uk/everyman).

TRIED & TESTED

## Mouth ulcer remedies

FRADOR £2.49 (01235 838590)

Stings slightly on application, but it does relieve pain and aid healing.

Bonjela £2.75 (Boots)

A nice tasting and smelling clear gel that's easy to apply, and gives instant pain relief.

Aloclair £4.99 (Boots and Superdrug)

A non-stinging mouthwash that tastes like cough mixture. It creates a shield around the ulcer and speeds up healing.

**FRADOR**  
For mouth ulcers

• Immediate effective relief  
• Soothes pain & aids healing  
• Hygienic application

RATING: 3/5



RATING: 5/5

RATING: 4/5

PHOTOS: ALAMY

Something on your mind? Send your health questions to Dr Mark Porter at [closerdoc@emap.com](mailto:closerdoc@emap.com)