



# ASK THE EXPERTS

Don't suffer in silence – our wellbeing wonder-team of experts is on hand to answer your health questions

*Are there any essential oils that are particularly good to use during the summer?*

**Nicole Barton**, consultant aromatherapist ([baseformula.com](http://baseformula.com)), says:

Lavender is one of the most versatile aromatherapy oils for summer ailments thanks to its calming, antiseptic, antibacterial, anti-inflammatory and pain-relieving properties. For bruises, cuts, grazes and insect bites, apply a couple of drops directly onto the affected area. For sunburn, mix a few drops with cold water in a bowl, soak a clean cloth in the mixture then wring it out and hold against the skin. When the cloth starts to warm up, re-soak it and then re-apply to your body. To aid relaxation and sleep, add a dash to your bath or massage into the chest before bed.

Peppermint is wonderfully cooling – mix a few drops with water in a spray bottle and spritz over yourself when it's hot. This remedy will also soothe sunburn and insect bites and keep bugs at bay. If you suffer from travel sickness or headaches, pop a couple of drops onto a tissue and inhale.

Finally, citronella is a must-have natural insect repellent. Combine 30 drops with 100ml water and spray onto your skin or vaporise the oil in an aromatherapy burner or diffuser.

*My eczema has been really bad recently. What could be the cause and how can I make it go away?*

**Patricia Gallagher**, director of HRI Herbal Medicine ([jessup.co.uk](http://jessup.co.uk)), says:

When eczema flares up it can make you feel really miserable. The itchiness, soreness and redness caused by the condition is usually treated with topical creams which aim to calm the inflammation and moisturise the skin. However, to keep it at bay you may need to make some lifestyle changes. Some people's eczema is caused by allergies so you could try keeping a food diary to see if there is anything that triggers it. Make sure you're getting plenty of omega 3 by eating salmon, coconut oil, nuts and seeds – this will help to moisturise your skin from within. Sufferers can be sensitive to perfumes and chemicals found in skincare and make-up (e.g. shower gel and face cream) so try fragrance-free products or simply use a bar of natural soap to wash with.

Stress is also a factor when it comes to eczema flare ups, so it's important to find ways to enjoy a balanced routine with downtime and relaxation opportunities factored in. You could also try a herbal medicine, for example HRI Clear Complexion tablets which are used for the symptomatic relief of minor skin conditions such as spots, pimples, blemishes, mild acne and eczema. With a little bit of patience and some trial and error, the severity and frequency of eczema can be greatly reduced by making a few simple but effective changes.

*I have a really busy schedule. Are there any easy things I can do to improve my health?*

**Gemma Hurditch**, a naturopath and lecturer at the College of Naturopathic Medicine ([naturopathy-uk.com](http://naturopathy-uk.com)), says:

Planning is key as it's much easier to eat healthily if the right food is available. Remove items that you want to stop snacking on from your cupboards and workplace such as processed, white flour foods and sugary or artificially sweetened products. Replace them with healthy alternatives like green tea, fruit and vegetables and raw unsalted nuts.

Implement a 'green day' once a week where you eat as much fruit and veg as you like but nothing else (steamed vegetables, soups and smoothies are all good options) and eat a healthy balanced diet for the rest of the week. Keep weeknights alcohol-free, cut down on red meat and aim to drink two litres of water a day. Try to spend two minutes when you wake up in the morning stretching and taking deep breaths, get a standing desk and make time for relaxing activities.