



ASK THE EXPERTS

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

I've been plagued by recurrent thrush. What can I do to get rid of it for good?

Kathie Bishop, a medical herbalist (intothewylde.com), says:

Firstly, check with your GP that it is definitely thrush you're suffering from, and then start to identify triggers. These may include sugars (both natural and refined), soaps, body washes and laundry detergents that upset the pH balance in your vagina and tight clothing or underwear made from synthetic fibres. You might find that you get it after sex or post-ovulation, as your vaginal secretions are more sugar-laden when you've released an egg.

Once you have found your triggers, you can start addressing them. If sugar or hormones are thought to be the cause, make an appointment with a herbalist or nutritionist to manage it safely. Home remedies include adding a clove of raw garlic to your meals as it has effective anti-fungal properties that can reach the mucous membranes of the vagina. Echinacea is another useful herb that helps to stimulate the immune system and aids your body in bringing the candida under control. You should also consider taking a probiotic supplement.

I'm useless at sticking to diets. How can I commit to long-term weight loss?

Dr Sally Norton, an NHS weight loss consultant (sallynorton.co.uk), says:

The key is to ditch the all or nothing mentality, which you can do by taking note of the following:

- Starting a new regime with a negative mindset (e.g. thinking that you're fat and unhealthy and must lose weight) is bound to fail – you need to be relaxed and think positively to make healthier choices. Prepare yourself by spending a week or so cutting down on junk food in favour of nutrient-rich meals, getting lots of sleep and going for brisk walks.
- Set your goals low, not high. Don't opt for a drastic diet that you'll struggle to stick to or aim to lose an unrealistic amount of weight. Choose a healthy but filling plan that won't leave you feeling hungry and deprived and a small weight loss target – ideally 1 – 2lbs a week.
- Don't focus solely on your size, as this will lead you to feel like a failure if you slip up. Set yourself a variety of goals, such as being fitter, more toned and eating more fruit and veg. That way, even if the diet doesn't go to plan one day, you'll still have achieved something that you can feel proud of.
- Remember that willpower is doomed to fail – it lets us down when we're stressed, tired or hungry, so don't try to fight it. Make one or two changes that, if kept up, will become subconscious habits that require no willpower.

I suffer from bloating. How can I reduce the symptoms?

Bernadette Keogh, a graduate in nutritional therapy from the College of Naturopathic Medicine (naturopathy-uk.com), says:

Eating in a relaxed environment and taking time to chew food properly is essential for good digestion. Avoid overeating and consuming fruit after a meal as this will lead to gas and swelling. Try adding black pepper, cumin or ginger to your dishes as they help to stimulate digestion and drink peppermint tea – menthol has been found to reduce bloating.

Another cause of the problem could be an imbalance of good and bad bacteria in the gut. Add small amounts of fermented foods such as miso soup, sauerkraut or sour pickles to your meals as they contain natural probiotics (good bacteria). Sugar, on the other hand, feeds the bad bacteria so avoid it as much as possible.

If the bloating persists, book an appointment to see a nutritional therapist who can help you with an elimination diet or tests to figure out if you are suffering from any intolerances or allergies.