

ASK *the* EXPERTS

Our panel of health experts answer your burning questions...



Q *“I suffer with a bad back. How can I ease the pain?”*

GEMMA HURDITCH,
naturopath and lecturer
at CNM College of
Naturopathic Medicine
(naturopathy-uk.com), says:

“Following an anti-inflammatory diet can really help alleviate pain. Focus on getting more omega 3 fatty acids into your diet by eating lots of oily fish such as sardines and mackerel, or take a tablespoon or two of freshly ground flaxseeds daily. Reduce the amount of opposing fatty acid omega 6 by limiting seed and vegetable oils. Substitute these with coconut or olive oil, for cooking and drizzling. A whole food, organic, plant-based diet should be your mainstay. Eliminate junk food and processed meals. Use spices liberally – turmeric, pepper, cloves, cinnamon, garlic, oregano and ginger can be enjoyed daily. Drink plenty of water, as back pain is worsened by dehydration. Magnesium supplementation or magnesium-rich foods, such as cashews or cooked spinach, may help you relax tense muscles. Stretching, particularly the hamstrings and across the shoulder blades, is useful. Massage, heat or cool packs can also soothe.”

Q *“My hair has become so thin lately – are there any ways to improve its strength?”*

ANABEL KINGSLEY,
trichologist
(philipkingsley.co.uk) says:

“Avoid being rough when you style your locks, so don’t pull harshly at your hair with a brush or comb and avoid using the highest heat setting on your dryer. Hair that is finer is naturally weaker and will therefore snap quite easily. Make sure you eat plenty of protein-rich and nutritious foods (such as chicken, tofu or eggs), and avoid fad diets. This is important regardless of whether you’re experiencing reduced hair volume, but a poor diet can certainly make hair loss worse. Be wary of products that promise to treat hair thinning or hair loss quickly as, due to the

nature of the hair growth cycle, it takes from six to 12 weeks to see results from any treatment. Don’t be afraid to shampoo your hair either as, contrary to popular belief, shampooing does not cause hair loss – quite the opposite – because frequent washing helps to keep the scalp environment healthy, which is essential to hair growth. Try to avoid constantly checking or pulling at your hair to assess whether it’s coming out. While it’s very hard not to be hyper hair aware when you are worried it is getting finer or is falling out, repeatedly running your hands through your hair can break strands and may even pull them out from the follicle.”

Q *“How can I strengthen my pelvic floor muscles?”*

DARREN BREEN,
managing director at
Vibrance Pelvic Trainer
(vibrancepelvictrainer.co.uk)

“American gynaecologist Dr Arnold Kegel brought the world’s attention to the group of muscles called the pelvic floor, which support the bladder, uterus, prostate and rectum. These muscles are often weakened by childbirth, which can result in incontinence. Dr Kegel’s famous exercises are used as a non-surgical way to strengthen these muscles and reduce those annoying leaks. Research shows that kegels can have an effectiveness rate of 80 percent, but many of us are put off by lack of results and uncertainty of how to do them. A structured program is the best way to use kegel exercises – start with three sets of 10 repetitions daily. It’s also vital that you use the correct technique. Vibrance is a medical grade vaginal probe that can help. Once inserted, a beeping system tells you when to contract and for how long, and the probe vibrates when you contract your pelvic floor muscles correctly. Remember that consistency is key – it will take a few weeks, or even months, to achieve a leak-free pelvic floor. Always consult a doctor or a pelvic health physiotherapist to confirm that you’re performing the exercises correctly, or for further advice.”