

ASK Dr ELLIE

@Dr_Ellie

The Mail on Sunday's brilliant GP... with all the health answers YOU need

Doctors can't stop these nosebleeds

I SUFFER from recurring nosebleeds. My own GP, four different ENT doctors and four cauterisation treatments have not stopped them – and I have now been told I will just have to live with them. I'm 87, and since 2013 I've had 40 attacks, twice needing hospital treatment. I am taking pills for high blood pressure and would appreciate any advice – for instance, are there foods I should be avoiding?

A NOSEBLEEDS have many causes which I expect have been considered given the extensive consultations you have had. I presume there is no sign of any polyps, sinus inflammation or a deviated septum – where the cartilage in the middle of the nose can block one side of the airway – all of which could be a cause.

I also assume your doctor has ruled out any problems with the clotting processes in your blood. Many people with high blood pressure take aspirin to thin their blood and prevent clots, but in your case this would be contributing to the problem; it may be worth weighing up with your doctor whether you need to continue taking aspirin if you are having such significant bleeding as a result.

Poorly controlled high blood pressure can cause nosebleeds – does your doctor need to look more closely at your blood-pressure control? It may be that with lower blood pressure, you would have fewer bleeds, so it is worth considering as long as you didn't feel dizzy on more medication.

I know many of my older patients like to keep their homes incredibly warm. If you do that, it could be that hot, dry air indoors is resulting in a dry nose which allows such regular bleeding.

If this is the case, perhaps you could consider a humidifier, which can be purchased pretty cheaply online or in department stores. If that's not an option, even damp towels on radiators can have a similar effect.

There are no dietary changes I can suggest that would be proven to prevent nosebleeds.

I AM concerned that the back of my four-month-old granddaughter's head is flat and misshapen on one side. It is very obvious but the doctor does not seem to think that this needs any treatment, and has said: 'As she is a girl, if it does not get any better her hair will cover it.' However, it's not getting any better. When I looked this up on the



Alicia's baby talk is pretty clueless

ACTRESS Alicia Silverstone has turned parenting guru with a book dedicated to getting pregnant and babycare the natural way. The notion is a good one: avoid many processed foods and unnecessary medicines, and concentrate on healthy lifestyles to make healthy babies. However, this notion has been taken to extremes.

Alicia, who starred in the film *Clueless*, is wary of vaccinations for babies because she's heard they 'are never the same after', and she urges pregnant women not to use mobile phones because she has a 'weird feeling about technological devices scrambling up my insides'. And because sharing her bed with a newborn worked for her, she thinks that is reason to recommend it to everyone. According to Alicia, we've been doing it 'since the dawn of evolution' so it's fine. 'Newborns have the ability to struggle,



FEAR: Alicia's parenting book

and squirm and cry to get out of what they perceive to be dangerous situations,' she says. It makes me wonder how much time Alicia has spent with a newborn if she believes this. The only dangerous situation I can envisage would be following this advice, given that research has shown so-called co-sleeping puts your baby at higher risk of cot death. The medical profession gave up advising people on the basis of weird feelings a long time ago – I wish actresses would do the same.

treatment in most cases. As a result of the very successful 'back-to-sleep' campaign, where we encouraged babies to be put to bed on their back to reduce the risk of cot death, babies like your granddaughter spend very little time in any other position.

She's too young to be sitting yet, so presumably she spends a great deal of time either sleeping or playing on her back, resting on her head.

The skull of a four-month-old baby is still soft enough to change shape from pressure, and it is the lying down that has made her head flat. This is not a concern at all if her development is otherwise normal, and your doctor is right that it needs no treatment – not because her hair

will cover it, but because as she spends less time resting on her head once she sits up, it will right itself.

Your daughter can encourage this by making sure her baby spends time each day playing on her tummy and also sitting in a sloping baby chair so her head isn't always on a flat surface.

Move the position of the mobile in the cot or the play mat so that she has to turn away from the flat side to look at the toys.

Your daughter does not need to spend money on caps. A recent study showed that wearing one for 23 hours a day for six months from the age of six months made no difference at all to head shape when compared with babies who had no treatment.

DO YOU HAVE A QUESTION FOR DR ELLIE?

Email DrEllie@mailsonunday.co.uk or write to Health, The Mail on Sunday, 2 Derry Street, London W8 5TT. Dr Ellie can only answer in a general context and cannot respond to individual cases, or give personal replies. If you have a health concern, always consult your own GP.

The power of porridge

BREAKFAST cereals were identified last week as a key to staving off heart attacks because they're a high-fibre food. Cue whoops of joy from the Sugar Puff-loving population. Well, sorry to be a killjoy, but while cereals – and by this we mean oats and grains – are a good source of roughage, you need to stick to the more boring varieties such as bran to get a hit.

A far healthier breakfast for the heart is

a warming bowl of porridge, which can deliver up to about 5g of fibre, and also valuable beta-glucan, a special type of fibre that helps to lower cholesterol.



I question wisdom of an autism quiz

EVERYONE loves a good multiple-choice questionnaire. Now Channel 4's *Embarrassing Bodies* has published online a host of carefully selected tests to measure your risk of developing or suffering from a variety of mental health conditions, such as depression, autism and obsessive compulsive disorder. However, it's important

to realise that a series of questions on a website cannot definitively diagnose anything because they overlook subtleties, more esoteric symptoms and significant background knowledge that can only be revealed during a proper consultation. That is why many doctors in practice actually decline to use them.

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