

ASK Dr ELLIE

@Dr_Ellie

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

Is my diabetes down to blood pressure pills?

Q I HAVE recently been diagnosed with borderline diabetes, which was a surprise. I am 82, weigh 8st 10lb and am 5ft 3in tall and so not overweight. I am also very active and eat plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables. My blood pressure is slightly high and I take medication for this. Could this be causing my blood sugar abnormalities?

A BOTH doctors and patients have a picture in their mind of the typical person who develops type 2 diabetes and it is certainly not someone who has kept slim, eats well and stays active into old age.

The current epidemic of the illness is linked very strongly with expanding waist circumferences, lack of exercise and the poor diets many have.

However, while type 2 diabetes is mostly associated with those problems, we do see it in people who don't fit that bill.

The chances of developing the condition increase with advancing age, and you are far more likely to have it if you have a first-degree relative with the condition.

It is also more common in those with high blood pressure and at least twice as likely in people of South Asian or African-Caribbean descent. So someone who has a combination of some or all of these risk factors can develop type 2 diabetes without fitting the usual stereotype.

If someone develops type 2 and is neither the typical profile nor has the other risk factors discussed, then a doctor should really consider what else could be going on.

This is especially important to rule out pancreatic cancer. Diabetes can be due to a deficiency of the hormone insulin which is produced by the pancreas. Side effects from medication should also be considered as possible causes of disease.

In general practice, we see a lot of symptoms that occur as a result of one medication or

another, and this is a particular issue in our elderly population who are using multiple medications. Blood pressure tablets however do not commonly cause changes in blood sugar control.

Q CAN I get my recommended amount of Vitamin D from the sun through the glass of a single-glazed window?

A VITAMIN D is a topic I hardly ever heard about at medical school, but now I talk about with patients most days. We commonly diagnose deficiencies in clinic and find sufferers have tiredness, muscle pains or muscle weakness, or bone pain in the back or legs.

Vitamin D helps us form and maintain healthy bones. It is particularly important for anyone growing – for example pregnant women and children. Recent research has suggested it aids a healthy immune system and may be protective against certain cancers.

Some experts now suggest it could be used to fortify food and so reduce the burden of disease. The food sources of Vitamin D are mainly limited to liver, eggs and oily fish so it can be difficult to get it through diet.

Public Health England recommends we get ten micrograms a day, and that people should consider taking a supplement to assure this.

The problem with Vitamin D is that it is made by the skin in response to sun exposure, specifically, UVB radiation (the same rays that burn the skin).

During the colder months, between October and April, very little UVB radiation will reach the UK, making the amount of Vitamin D anyone can produce pretty negligible.

Most glass used for windows blocks UVB, so you are unlikely to get redness or sunburn through a window and you are also not going to make Vitamin D. And be warned: glass does not block UVA rays that cause skin ageing.

The dentist who ran out of NHS cash

A FRIEND emailed me this week telling me their dentist had run out of NHS money that month, so would only offer her a private appointment. She was told the practice had apparently reached its capacity for NHS treatment

for the year 2016/17. She was advised to pay for treatment or wait until April for her check-up when new NHS funds would come through. I'd never heard of such a thing happening within my dental colleagues' practices

and my immediate worry was that this could happen to hospitals and GP practices in the future. Or maybe it is happening already? Have you experienced this? I would be very keen to hear about it.



Gillian shows menopause can be sexy

SULTRY, sexy... and perimenopausal? Actress Gillian Anderson, left, ticks all the boxes, redefining somewhat the stereotype of a middle-aged, flustered, flushed, 'grumpy old woman'.

Last week, the X-Files star, 48, featured in Lena Dunham's Lenny newsletter, speaking openly about her state – the period of hormonal decline before menopause proper.

'I was used to being able to balance a lot of things, and all of a sudden I felt like I could handle nothing,' she said. 'I felt like somebody else had taken over my brain.'

In my experience from clinic, she is certainly not alone. Women going through these changes can be misdiagnosed with depression, anxiety and other illnesses.

This can be very distressing to go through for any woman, especially given that it is essentially a 'normal' life stage – much like adolescence.

So I'm glad Gillian has been so frank about this. Raising awareness of these awkward phases is key, so that women feel able to approach their peers and talk about it, as well as seeking any medical help they may need.

HAVE you had your ten a day yet? Me neither!

We are now told by scientists that 'five-a-day' fruit and veg is not sufficient, and ten-a-day is what we need to eat for fantastic health benefits such as preventing heart disease and cancer. The science is certainly there, but I question the value of the plethora of healthy-eating advice we are bombarded with. The constant onslaught from all quarters dilutes the messages. Most people in the UK don't eat anywhere near the five-a-day target. It would be more beneficial to help people achieve that before starting on a whole new set of unrealistic rules.

THE QUEEN was pictured last week riding her horse in Windsor. At the age of 90, she is certainly redefining the term 'elderly'.

Of course she has had a very different life to the rest of the elderly population but she still serves as an example that age is simply a number, and 'elderly' doesn't have to be synonymous with frail or infirm.

Keeping your body fit and your brain active can ward off many supposedly elderly characteristics, as the Queen proves.

DO YOU HAVE A QUESTION FOR DR ELLIE CANNON?

Email DrEllie@mailonsunday.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.

SUGAR SPY: CAESAR DRESSING

How much sugar lurks inside your favourite foods?



YES PLEASE!

Soigne Miracle Oil
Healthy cuticles are not just a beauty matter – they protect the root of the nails. This treatment contains mineral and cherry plum oils, which heal cracked cuticles and help prevent dryness and brittleness. £15, soignenails.com



ARE PEOPLE WITH FAIR SKIN MORE LIKELY TO GET SKIN CANCER?
Dr Daniel Glass, of The Dermatology

Clinic, Harley Street, says: 'The MC1R gene has been linked to development of melanoma skin cancer – and is also linked to fair skin type. Those with fair

skin should limit their sun exposure and use appropriate clothing and sun screen. If you notice any pigmented lesion on your skin, consult a dermatologist.'