TABOO HEALTH NIGGLES

SIMPLE SOLUTIONS FOR THOSE EMBARRASSING PROBLEMS

FLATULENCE

It may be a natural part of the digestive process but passing wind at the wrong moment can be super-embarrassing, not to mention anti-social! The odd fart is normal, but if they're happening too often or are extra smelly, it can indicate digestive problems says naturopath, Mim Beim (mimbeim.com). "It's often due to the body not producing enough digestive enzymes which means food isn't digested properly," she says. "A microbiome that's out of whack can also lead to flatulence, so a probiotic may be helpful too."

VAGINAL THRUSH

Caused by an overgrowth of the Candida albicans yeast, thrush can cause severe itching, redness, stinging and burning when passing urine and a vaginal discharge. "Thrush is incredibly common, so don't be too embarrassed to ask for help," says Dr Mualla McManus from Gold Cross Pharmacy in Redfern, NSW. "Your pharmacist can advise on topical and oral over-the-counter treatments that will help resolve it very quickly."

HAEMORRHOIDS

Sometimes called piles, haemorrhoids are swollen veins around the anus or inside the rectum, which can lead to itching, pain, swelling and bleeding. The causes include chronic constipation or diarrhoea, straining during a bowel movement, obesity, pregnancy and a low-fibre diet. Lifestyle changes can be beneficial, but always check first with your doctor that it is actually a haemorrhoid, advises Mim. "Keeping your stools soft and getting enough fluids can help, as can using moistened toilet paper," she says.

SKIN TAGS

These painless growths often appear in areas such as the armpits, groin folds, under the breasts and on the upper chest. They're common in mid-life, but can also crop up in pregnancy, in people who are obese and those who are diabetic. "It can be due to either high insulin or oestrogen," says Mim. "A low-GI diet and avoiding sugar can help keep insulin down," she says. "Or if oestrogen is the cause, it's to do with liver clearance so broccoli sprouts are helpful. Alternatively, load up on brassicas such as broccoli, cauliflower and brussels sprouts to help clear the oestrogen." Skin tags can be removed surgically, or there are preparations available in pharmacies that can help.

THIGH CHAFING

As the weather warms up, exercising or even walking can sometimes result in chafing, and the inner thighs are often affected, says Daphne Kapetas, cosmetic chemist and creator of anti-chafing cream Calmmé. "If you have skin that's susceptible and your thighs either rub together or against clothing this can result in chafing or some type of rash," she explains. "A chafing cream allows your skin to glide and helps prevent chafing by creating a long-lasting barrier. Also, wearing clothing made from natural fibres, like cotton, will allow your skin to breathe," says Daphne. "Keep the affected area clean and dry, and when at home either go commando or give your skin a break by just wearing underwear."

Text: Sue Ramsey. Always check with your health practitioner, before taking supplements or changing your health routine.

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