



# YOUR HEALTH

Got a medical problem or need health advice?  
Ask Dr Rosemary Leonard

**Q** Every summer I get itchy, sore ears, and I'm sure it's from swimming outside. I usually end up needing antibiotic drops from my doctor, but is there a way to prevent the problem in the first place?

**A** The sea, rivers and even swimming pools can harbour a variety of nasty bugs that can cause minor infections and inflammation in the ear canals, especially in warm, humid weather. The best solution to your dilemma is to try to keep your ears dry when you are in the water, by either wearing earplugs or a swimming hat. Afterwards, tip any water out of your ears, and if possible, dry them with a hair dryer on a low setting. Don't be

tempted to dry them by poking cotton buds (or anything else) inside, as this can cause trauma and also disrupt the natural protective covering of wax. It can also help if you avoid getting shampoo or other hair products inside your ears. EarCalm (£5.59, [www.boots.com](http://www.boots.com)), which contains mild acetic acid, can help prevent bacterial growth inside the ears, especially if used at the first sign of discomfort, and may prevent the need for antibiotic drops.



## WHAT'S THE ALTERNATIVE for vaginal dryness?

Feel like sex, but your body doesn't? Lack of lubrication is a common problem among women, especially after childbirth, around menopause or when you're just plain tired! Love Lube is a new natural lubricant containing ylang-ylang and frangipani. Hand-made on the Isle of Skye, it is organic and non-toxic. Love Lube costs £9.99 for 15ml and is available in natural health stores or online at [www.livenative.co.uk](http://www.livenative.co.uk).



## NEW AT YOUR DOCTOR'S... Circadin

Circadin is a new way of treating those who have problems getting to sleep. Containing melatonin, a hormone produced naturally as light levels fall at dusk, it is thought to help control the body clock and promote restful sleep. Melatonin tablets, which have been available in the USA for several years, are now available on prescription in the UK. The recommended dose is one tablet taken one to two hours before bedtime, continued for three weeks.

**Q** I keep getting pins and needles in the middle fingers of my hand. My GP has diagnosed Carpal Tunnel Syndrome and advised me to rest it, which isn't easy with three children and a part-time job as a secretary! Any suggestions?

**A** Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is caused by pressure on the nerve to the middle fingers of the hand, and is often due to inflammation caused by overuse. Wearing a splint on your wrist may force you to rest your hand. Just a week off from typing should bring some relief, and explain to your family that you need help, especially with household chores.

If this does not help after a month, a steroid injection to the wrist may ease the inflammation, but it is vital that you don't use your wrist or hand for a couple of days afterwards. If the problem persists, then surgery to relieve the pressure on the nerve can be very successful. It is usually done on a day-case basis, but your wrist will be sore for a couple of weeks afterwards.

## AT YOUR CHEMIST – which treatment for indigestion?

Most of us have experienced indigestion or heartburn – but what's the right remedy?

**ANTACIDS** such as Rennie, which neutralise stomach acid, and Gaviscon, which contains stomach-lining alginates (good for heartburn), are best for occasional bouts.

**H2 RECEPTOR ANTAGONISTS** such as Zantac, are more powerful and last longer, so are better for more frequent problems, even though they take a few hours to kick in.

**PROTON PUMP INHIBITORS** such as Losec, are the most powerful, so are best if you have two or more attacks a week. They can take three to four days to take effect. **w&h**

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