

Jan de Vries



IT'S FUNNY how the old remedies keep coming back as if they've just been discovered.

Some years ago everyone was full of praise for vitamin E. I remember being puzzled by patients and doctors who remarked on the wonders it could do for the heart and circulation. I was puzzled because to me this wasn't news.

From my early days I've known wheatgerm oil, a naturally high source of vitamin E, and other natural foods such as garlic could help with heart disease and blood pressure problems. That the scientific world was treating this as a revelation made me smile.

When garlic came under the scientific gaze I was very interested. Belonging to the onion family we know garlic contains many beneficial compounds but has the problem of being a bit smelly when crushed and cooked.

The unpleasant smell on the breath is a common give-away that a person has been eating garlic but in spite of this it's been used in our diet for more than 6000 years.

The ancient Egyptians even worshipped garlic. Clay models of garlic were discovered in the tomb of Tutankhamun, indicating how important they considered it to be. Despite this, its

smell causes many people to avoid it more than they should.

One good thing that came out of all this scientific testing was confirmation that allicin, the key compound in garlic, is only produced when the bulb is crushed. Whereas if you peel a clove of garlic it has little smell.

During the crushing process a special enzyme is activated and it converts into the health-promoting, but smelly, allicin.

The trick is to get this reaction to occur in the lower gut where the garlic smell can't find its way out.

Biologist Dr David Kraus from the University of Alabama made the discovery about garlic and its ability to improve heart and circulatory health.

Get ancient health benefits of garlic

He noticed that the sulphur-based compounds reacted with the red blood cells causing them to release substances that relaxed the muscular walls of blood vessels. This opened up the circulation, reducing blood pressure and boosting the delivery of blood to the periphery and brain.

Another good effect is reduced strain on the heart. Their studies showed that allicin was the key agent in this effect. Dr Kraus suggested this might explain why heart disease is so rare in garlic-eating countries in the Far East and Mediterranean.

Another potential benefit of taking



garlic regularly it prevents infections. Those worried about hospital infections and the dreaded MRSA could do a lot worse than take a good garlic supplement. It would be ironic if one of the biggest problems facing our hospitals could be helped with a simple dose of garlic.

For more information on lifestyle, diet and remedies read my book *Heart And Blood Circulatory Problems* (ISBN: 1840185538, £5.99) and try Garlinase (£9.99), an enteric coated (allowing it to pass through the stomach before releasing the medication) garlic supplement, available at Jan de Vries shops and clinics or by mail order on 01292 317670.

The only thing you have to be careful with is not to take big doses alongside blood thinning drugs such as warfarin.

● Jan will try to answer all your health queries personally. Just send your letters with an SAE to Jan de Vries, The Sunday Post, 2 Albert Square, Dundee DD1 9QJ. You can phone Jan's helpline on 01292 318846 from 9 am - 4.30 pm Mon - Fri or email him at info@jandevrieshealth.co.uk

the doc replies

Has cherry remedy really cured his gout?

MY husband had severe gout and couldn't walk. He took a product called cherry active concentrate that claimed it could help and within a week he was up and about again. Have you heard of this before?

Gout is caused by abnormally high levels of uric acid in the blood. When the level is critically high little crystals form in the joints causing the severe pain of gout. The level of the acid in the blood can be lowered by dietary means (avoiding red meat and alcohol) but long-term treatment with allopurinol is required.

Natural remedies are unlikely to protect against complications of gout. Even though the symptoms have gone away he could still be building up small crystals in the joints or, worse still, the kidneys. I would recommend he go back on prescribed tablets.

IF YOU have healthy arteries at the back of your eyes does that mean all your arteries are healthy?

We can check the state of the arteries by looking at the back of the eye. This gives a good view of the state of blood vessels but doesn't completely rule out narrowed arteries elsewhere. Checking of the blood vessels in the eyes is particularly important for diabetics.

IS DIET COKE addictive? My wife is unable to do without it.

It's not addictive and taken in moderate amounts it won't cause any harm.

DO YOU have a problem you would like The Doc to answer? Send brief details to The Doc Replies, 144 Port Dundas Road, Glasgow, G4 0HZ. Please do not include an SAE as the Doc cannot send personal replies.

I HAVE MS and when I'm prescribed tablets I have difficulty swallowing them.

Some people have problems swallowing tablets and often there's no particular reason. In some cases there are other medical conditions that predispose people to this. Ask your doc if any alternative medicines can be prescribed in liquid or dissolvable form.

I'M TAKING Voltaren and I've been given Losec to protect my stomach. Since I've been on this I've noticed my urine is foamy.

Voltaren and other medications like it can affect the kidneys in some circumstances. You may produce more protein in your urine, which could cause it to be foamy. I think it's important to get your urine checked. If you can manage without your medication I would try to stop it for the moment.

WHENEVER I eat I get diarrhoea and severe pain in the left of my abdomen when I move a certain way. I had a CT scan and a colonoscopy, which were both clear.

That your tests were normal is reassuring and I assume you had blood tests as well. It's possible you have irritable bowel syndrome. If this is so, you could try a high-fibre diet. However, some people find this exacerbates the problem.

Regular exercise is helpful and various medications from your chemist can be used. Some people find ispaghula husk regulates bowel motions and anti-spasmodic medication might ease the pain. Discuss these with your pharmacist and see if any lifestyle changes could help.

DURING THE night I found myself dressed even though I had prepared myself for bed. All I remember is taking off the sweater I had somehow put on but couldn't remember doing it. I still had my nightdress on underneath. I'm epileptic and had surgery to remove some cells from my brain as I had a feeling of electric spasms from time to time. I take lamotrigine, Frisium and diazepam. I live alone and am worried it might happen again.

It's difficult to say whether this is anything to do with your epilepsy or previous brain surgery. You should mention it to your doc or neurologist. Some neurology centres in Scotland have the facility to video inpatients to see how they behave at night. This can then lead to treatment for certain problems.

CAN I try Viagra — I have mild angina.

Before prescribing this we check it doesn't interact with any medication you're already on so you must talk to your doc. It should be used with caution in people with heart problems and certainly not used by anyone taking nitrate medication such as GTN spray, isosorbide mononitrate or dinitrate tablets. It should not be used after a recent stroke or heart attack or if you have unstable angina. Do not buy medication over the Internet without being properly assessed first by your doc.

I HAVE helicobacter pylori and had to stop taking antibiotics because of terrible side-effects. I'm now treating it with manuka honey and LicoSoothe. How long will it take to clear up?

Helicobacter pylori requires two antibiotics and an acid suppression drug to affect a cure. Natural or herbal remedies might soothe your stomach but are unlikely to dislodge the bug.

I SUFFER from cold feet at night. Doc says my circulation is fine and there's nothing he can do about it. I'm 82.

In somebody of your age the first thing we would do is check the arterial circulation in your feet and legs. Other symptoms of blockage in the arteries can be pain in the calves, especially when walking. This problem is more likely if you're a smoker or have diabetes. If none of this applies it could be you have Raynaud's phenomenon, which is caused by spasms in the tiny blood vessels in the feet and hands. Provided there are no major visible changes to your feet the simplest thing to do is wear thick socks.

health checks

● **V WATER** is a new drink combining pure spring water with vitamins, minerals and herbal extracts. The range includes six delicious varieties full of natural extracts to match your mood.

Kick contains ginger, mango, vitamins C and B and ginseng to give you a quick pick-me-up. Shield uses zinc, vitamin C, echinacea and astragalus to boost your immune system and De-Stress soothes you with camomile and hibiscus. Glow gives your skin the red carpet treatment with selenium and burdock root. Vital V is an essential vitamin and mineral formula for general health and Detox is a must for after a night out.

V Water (£1.50) is available from Waitrose, Sainsbury's and delis.

● **WINTER CAN** leave you feeling run down with bugs and viruses, so give your immune system a boost with Sambucol elderberry extract.

Black elderberries have been used for centuries as a home remedy as they contain a high level of natural antioxidants.

The berries also contain a unique compound that coats viruses and limits their ability to penetrate and infect healthy cells.

Available in liquid and lozenge forms, Sambucol is suitable for all the family and you can buy it from supermarkets and all good chemists.

● **AS WE** get older we're more prone to skin conditions such as gravitational eczema and leg sores due to poor circulation and a weakening of vein walls in the lower legs.

This type of eczema is an itchy rash specific to the lower parts of the legs and scratching can lead to leg ulcers that are difficult to treat.

Many people with this condition might also have to wear compression hosiery to improve circulation and such hosiery is often discarded as tight clothes make the problem worse.

DermaSilks Heel-less Undersocks solve two problems in one. Firstly, they're made from a special hypoallergenic silk which maintains a stable moisture balance on the skin and reduces itchiness by allowing the skin to stay cool.

DermaSilk also has an antimicrobial shield helping reduce the possibility of secondary infections and are designed for frequent washing. A pack of two pairs cost £26.95 and they're available on prescription. Tel. 08700 424232 or visit www.dermasilk.co.uk

