

Naturopath MICHAEL VAN STRATEN rounds up the latest health news

HEALTH MATTERS

FREE FIRST AID CD-ROM
More than 4,000 die every year in accidents in the home but the British Red Cross says many of us don't feel confident in treating the most common life-threatening conditions. Now the Red Cross has produced a First Aid PC CD-ROM which takes you through a number of emergency situations and teaches you how to administer basic first aid. We have 100 of the CDs (usually £9.99) to give away. Send your name and address to British Red Cross/Express Woman Giveaway, 9 Grosvenor Crescent, London SW1X 7EJ. The first 100 entries which are selected at random will win the CDs.

KEEP TAKING THE CRANBERRY
Naturopaths have always recommended cranberry juice for urinary infections such as cystitis. Now a new study in the current issue of the Journal of the American Medical Association has more good news. The research found that even bacteria resistant to antibiotics – the conventional treatment for urinary infections – are prevented from growing on the walls of the urinary tract when patients drink cranberry juice. Cranberry juice contains a group of chemicals called proanthocyanidins which have powerful protective qualities and

make the berries such a distinctive red colour.
GAP YEAR HEALTH
If your child is about to flee the nest for a gap year, make sure they take a fully-equipped first aid kit with them. The Medipac will help them cope with any minor problem including chest infections, diarrhoea, eye and ear infections, toothache, sprains, itching, insomnia, deep cuts and fevers. There's a range of painkillers in a variety of strengths, gauzes, a sterile needle and nylon thread for stitches. The pack can also hold up to 12 prescription medicines. It costs £79.99 and includes annual membership of e-med (usually £20) – an online medical service which will give you an answer to any medical question within four hours. To obtain a Medipac, call 020 7806 4028 or visit www.e-med.co.uk

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Sickness can cause immense distress – but it can also be an inspiration. JOHN TRIGGS meets three people whose experiences prompted them to start new businesses helping to ease problems for others

ALISON BESAIES, 37, lives in Thames Ditton, Surrey, with husband Imed, 39, a computer software developer, their daughter Sumaia, eight, and son Ayman, six. She gave up her job as a fashion buyer to set up a website selling allergy products



NEW START: Isabel's illness sparked Charlotte and Jason's decision to set up their database

I HAVE suffered from allergies since I was eight. It started with hay fever but as I got older I also discovered I was allergic to animal hair, dust mites and nickel. I also developed severe psoriasis. After I'd given birth to Sumaia I discovered I had passed on my allergies to her. She developed eczema and by the time she was 18 months had severe asthma attacks and often had to go to hospital. I realised the provision of allergy products in the UK was very poor. They were badly-designed and often completely impractical. Children with asthma are expected to carry bulky inhalers and nebulisers – no wonder I found it hard persuading Sumaia to use her equipment. The lack of decent, easily available allergy products inspired me to create a website where drug-free products could be obtained. Until I created www.allergymatters.com, no such site existed in Britain. My husband Imed helped to design the site and Sumaia and I test all the products to ensure we are selling only the things that are genuinely useful. The website has just been launched and my daughter has already got a trendy, colourful and smaller nebuliser. Since we have tried some of the products we have also noticed we aren't suffering from our allergies as much. At some time in their lives 25 per cent of people in Britain suffer from allergies and the figure is rising by 5 per cent each year, so it is good to know we are helping. Visit www.allergymatters.com

Former managers CHARLOTTE MAUDE, 39, and husband Jason, 43, live in Barnes, South West London, with their children Isabel, six, Sam, five, and Joseph, one. After Isabel was a victim of a flesh-eating bug they set-up a database to help doctors diagnose paediatric conditions
THREE years ago Isabel, then three and a half, developed a rash all over her body. Her temperature wouldn't stop climbing and she was vomiting so I took her to see the doctor. He said it was chickenpox. But next day her temperature continued to climb until it was up to more than 40 degrees. Isabel also developed a swollen rash on her stomach. This time we took her to the accident and emergency department but were again told there was nothing seriously wrong. A few days later her condition deteriorated. She was virtually lifeless and the rash had turned purple. This time when we took her to hospital her blood pressure was so low she became delirious and had multiple organ failure. We later learned she was suffering from the flesh-eating bug necrotizing fasciitis. She was immediately transferred to the paediatric intensive care unit at St Mary's Hospital in Paddington. To stop the bug from spreading, they had to cut away all the affected flesh. She came off the ventilator but a week later had a cardiac arrest. For more than 30 minutes she had no pulse. The fact that Isabel was able to survive without brain damage was viewed as a miracle. The doctors told us that if her condition had been diagnosed earlier she would never have come so close to death. Isabel had extensive plastic surgery to replace the flesh that was removed but is otherwise well. Instead of trying to blame someone, we gave up our jobs and began setting-up a database to help doctors make quicker diagnoses. The database is almost complete and when finished will contain medical information in an accessible form. Doctors fill in the symptoms and the search engine does the rest. At the moment the system deals only with paediatric medicine but we hope to develop a similar database for adults. We have named the database after Isabel. The Isabel Medical Charity needs

to raise another £100,000 to complete the diagnostic system for children and £300,000 to extend it to adults. To make a donation, visit www.isabel.org call 020 8748 4330 or write to the Isabel Medical Charity, PO Box 28832, London SW13 9DZ.
PETER MURRAY, 53, was a director of several companies when he was diagnosed with diabetes. He lives near Northampton with wife Carol and children Kate, 22, Stuart, 21, and Jane, 18. He has started a firm that produces vibrating watches to remind people when to take medication
ABOUT five years ago I noticed I was becoming very tired and listless in the afternoons. I thought it was

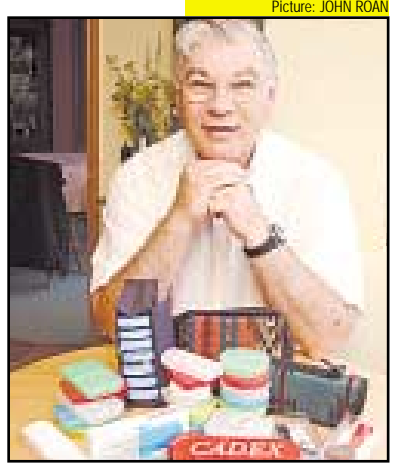


PERSONAL TOUCH: Alison, her husband Imed, who helped to set up the website, and Sumaia who helps to test products

Inventive ways to cope with illness

because I was working too hard but then I noticed I was always thirsty. One day I drank more than 16 pints of liquid and still felt like I needed more. My GP told me I had type two diabetes. It was a tremendous shock, especially as I had always been healthy and fit. He gave me a drug to help my body absorb insulin better. It wasn't long before I was taking one lot of pills twice a day and another lot three times a day. If I missed a pill I'd feel run down, exhausted and nauseous – but even with this incentive I often forgot. I was surprised there wasn't a product to discreetly remind me when I needed to take my medication. I liaised with a Swedish entrepreneur, who spoke to his

contacts in Japan. We came up with a watch that can be set with up to six alarms a day and vibrates rather than beeps – it can be embarrassing when your watch beeps in the cinema or an important meeting. I called the watch MedicAlarm and set up MedicAlarm Limited with former colleagues. The watches, which cost £49.95, have become very popular – not just among diabetics but among people with heart disease, Parkinson's, asthma and HIV. Carers and nurses also use them. In addition we have launched a whole range of products designed to help people remember to take their medication. For information on MedicAlarm products, call 01604 646200 or visit www.medicalarm.co.uk



GENTLE REMINDER: Peter Murray kept forgetting to take his pills

A-PEELING: Jane Marsh uses microdermabrasion to brighten clients' complexions

THERE'S something about a facial peel that sounds painful and disfiguring – peeling is for bananas, not faces. So when I went for a microdermpeel – a combination of a glycolic peel and microdermabrasion – I expected to look so hideous that I wouldn't be able to leave the house for weeks. To my relief, that wasn't the case, it was a pleasant and effective treatment. It begins with a consultation with a skin specialist, in my case Jane Marsh at Laser Aesthetics in London's West End. She decided my skin was perfect for the deep cleansing which is effective on scarring, signs of ageing and even stretch marks. Scars from my attractive habit of picking spots would fade and blocked pores and blackheads would be flushed

The secret of smooth skin

The latest skin peels combined with microdermabrasion claim to cleanse your skin and leave it looking and feeling smoother than ever. LORNA FRAME decides to give it a try
out, bombarded with micro-crystals and then plumped up. In short, my complexion would be brighter and fresher. Sounded good to me. To prepare my skin, I used Jan Marini home-care products, which cost £65, for three weeks beforehand. Containing AHAs (fruit acids), these products claim to "resurface" your skin. They last for months so you can continue the treatment at home. The microdermpeel treatment takes around an hour and isn't much different from a normal facial except it tingles a lot more at various stages. It begins with a glycolic peel, which involves putting a 40 per cent glycolic acid solution on your face and leaving it for five to 10 minutes. This is probably the most uncomfortable stage. Then microdermabrasion begins. This is completely painless and quite satisfying as you almost feel all the gunk from your pores being blasted out. An electronic probe is swept across your face, firing out tiny crystals and cleaning deep into your pores. The length of time the probe is used depends on how congested the skin is. Next, enzymes are applied which are made from a papaya derivative which again peels the skin but at a level closer to the surface, digesting dead skin cells. The treatment is finished with a facial massage to ensure lymph glands are unblocked and the circulation is stimulated. Finally, moisturiser with an SPF 15 is applied. Jane warned that my skin might be a little red and dry for a few days but immediately I could see a huge difference. My skin was brighter and much cleaner, with the glow I get from a few days in the fresh air. A week later I really noticed a change. Now I didn't look like one of those grey people who spends 10 hours a day in an office – even though I am. A one-hour treatment at Laser Aesthetics UK, Wigmere Street, London, costs £80. A course of six treatments is £400. Contact 020 7935 3366 for details or call 0800 0858367 for a clinic in your area.

TANIA BRYER

In an exclusive new column, TV presenter TANIA BRYER will each week reveal the beauty secrets of her celebrity friends and give her verdict on them. Tania, 39, is married to Tim Moufarrige, president of sports marketing company, Octagon. They have two daughters, Natasha, three, and Francesca, 11 months. Here, Tania explains why exfoliation is the key to radiant skin

IF THERE'S one thing I always notice about the celebrities I meet, it's that most of them are adorned with two major beauty assets – a sparkling white smile and radiant, translucent skin. If you want to make a good impression, smooth, flawless skin will do it every time. But it's not easy getting that iridescent glow. Even the most rigorous cleansing routine can't get rid of the dead skin cells which build up on the face, making it look dull and lifeless. Cleansing and toning will take some of the dead cells away – but soap, facial washes and cream cleansers only get rid of surface make-up. Without weekly exfoliation, skin that's cleansed and moisturised daily can still look tired – and even the best illuminating foundations and highlighters can't make it sparkle. Thankfully, the secret of radiant skin has been bottled. Depending on your skin type, there are plenty of exfoliators to choose from. I love Origins' Never A Dull Moment Skin-brightening face polishers with fruit enzymes, £20 (0800 731 4039). It's a good, old-fashioned exfoliator with ground apricot and mango seeds which gently slough away dead cells. Clarin's Gentle Facial Peeling, £19, left, (0800 0363558), is another option. This paste spreads over your face and is peeled off with your fingers. The peeling motion acts to exfoliate, leaving fresh, radiant skin. For those who prefer to revive their face with a mask, Elizabeth Arden's Peel and Reveal Revitalising Treatment, £23.50, bottom left, (department stores and Boots), is a must-have. The gluey, peel-off mask, which is applied with a brush, takes off every last remnant of the day to leave skin soft and luminous. A great cheaper alternative is Boots' Fresh Petal Power Face Peel, £3. This sticky mask containing Ylang Ylang and Jasmine revives skin wonderfully. If you don't like the idea of a sticky mask or grainy exfoliators, try the new Elemis Papaya Enzyme Peel, £23.50, above left, (020 8954 8033). On application this gorgeous cream feels like a moisturiser but it actually exfoliates, giving tired skin a visible boost. Similarly, Origin's Starting Over, £18.50, above left, promises to give skin a smoother and more radiant surface each day.