

Health & wellbeing

Great advice to keep you happy and healthy

Q: I've been having problems remembering things that happened recently. Should I be worried I might have dementia?



Sheelagh Donovan, Health Information Specialist at Age UK, is here to help.

In later life people tend to forget things from time to time, but being forgetful doesn't necessarily mean you have dementia. There are common conditions that could be causing this, such as stress, vitamin deficiencies or thyroid problems.

If you are worried, then certainly visit your GP. They should be able to tell you what's causing your symptoms. If your GP thinks it may be dementia, you might be referred for an assessment with a specialist or memory clinic.

Age UK knows that growing older doesn't come with a manual. That's why we provide free information and advice on topics from claiming benefits to care homes.

For advice or to order any of our guides, like "Your Mind Matters", visit www.ageuk.org.uk or call Age UK Advice on 0800 169 6565, 365 days a year from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m.



In The News

Clever Socks

Diabetes patients could soon be issued with hi-tech socks designed to help prevent ulcers from developing.

Around 7,000 diabetes patients in the UK end up having amputations caused by infected ulcers, but it is hoped that these clever socks will reduce that number.

The sock fabric contains tiny sensors which record changes in skin temperature. This can indicate the possible inflammation that can lead to ulcers.

These sensors transmit data to a smartphone app which immediately warns patients to take action to prevent an ulcer forming.

Signs You May Be Grinding Your Teeth

As many as 70% of the population is unknowingly grinding their teeth at night which, according to top dentist Dr Uchenna Okoye, puts them at risk of sensitivity and accelerated dental ageing. She recommends talking to your dentist about a bite guard to wear at night if you notice these signs:

- you wake up with an aching jaw and headache
- the edges of your front teeth are flat (you may have ground the edges down)
- you have a ridge along your inner cheeks (which can get caught in your grinding action)
- you have heightened tooth sensitivity from tiny fractures in your teeth



Oats rate high in the healthy breakfast stakes, but now sprouted oats are claiming to be even more nutritious.

When grains are allowed to start the sprouting process the starch content is slightly reduced because it will have been digested by the young shoot to fuel its awakening, and other nutrients, such as proteins, vitamins and minerals, increase slightly.

Ordinary oats are steamed before being turned into flakes, but sprouted oats are rolled raw during the sprouting process. This makes the flavour more oaty and preserves the natural nutrients. Sprouted grains may also be better tolerated digestively, too.

New scientific discoveries are being made



Friendly Bacteria



Not all germs are bad news. Our Health Writer, Colleen Shannon, reports.

WHAT if I told you that scientists are hot on the trail of discoveries that may one day improve the treatment of cancer, diabetes, heart disease, obesity, immune disorders, digestive conditions and mental health problems?

It's all about the humble bacteria that live in your tummy. While these friendly bacteria have always been part of us, quietly doing their vital work in the body, science is only starting to understand their mysteries.

These bacteria are known as the microbiome. Brace yourself for a couple of astounding facts: bacteria account for 90% of the cells in the body, and their genes outnumber our own by 100 to one.

I heard these numbers from Dr Anton Emmanuel, Consultant in Neurogastroenterology at University College London and a Medical Trustee for the digestive diseases charity, Guts UK.

He explained that every person is different – your microbiome is individual to you, like fingerprints. That's one reason why you can't recommend a particular diet that works best for everyone (although smoking does often affect the microbiome badly).

It seems much of our bacterial

profile is set in the early years: from the time we are born, through infancy (especially with breastfeeding) and in early childhood. After that, the microbiome seems to remain fairly stable throughout life.

When healthy, these bacteria help to protect us from dangerous infections. They work with the body to digest our food, synthesise vitamins, and even promote the transmission of nerve messages to and from the brain.

There are some 100,000 nerve cells in your digestive system – more than in your spinal cord. Because of this it is sometimes called the second brain. We need all those nerves to tell us when we're hungry and to keep the largely unconscious process of digestion moving along.

We all know the feeling of butterflies in the tummy when we're scared or anxious. It's also down to this network of nerves. Our friendly bacteria help those nerve messages get through.

It's too early to get our hopes up, but in some studies certain characteristics of the microbiome have been associated with conditions like schizophrenia and depression. Researchers are also looking at the other conditions affecting the brain and nervous system, like multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's disease.

The biggest project of all, the Human Microbiome Project, aims to map all of the bacterial genes that live in our intestines. The ultimate goal is to provide personalised medicine – that is, individualised diagnosis and treatment – for a range of conditions.

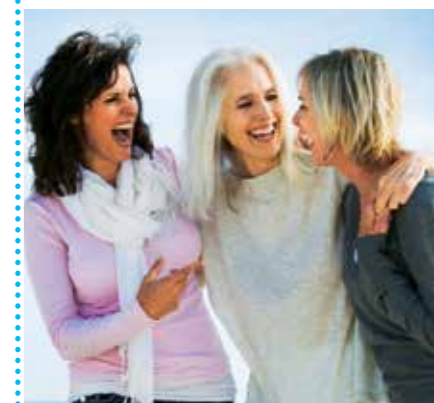
You can read more on the Guts UK website at gutscharity.org.uk, along with information about many digestive diseases and lifestyle advice. ■

Laugh A Little

Aches and pains are an infuriatingly common consequence of the ageing process. Try to alleviate the effects of this by ensuring you incorporate a little fun into your life.

Whether you're meeting up with friends or family, or watching comedy or funny movies, studies show your pain threshold could go up by as much as 10% through laughter.

Studies also show the higher pain threshold is best when you are laughing in groups rather than alone.



Sun Protection Supplement

As well as regularly reapplying sun lotion, research suggests that we can further protect our skin from sun damage and burning by taking the antioxidant-rich supplement astaxanthin to help boost UV protection.

A natural sunscreen, astaxanthin is found in algae and the organisms that feed on it where it helps protect the plants. Although it cannot replace conventional topical sun lotions, it could act as a secondary level of protection.

Green Beauty with Astaxanthin is £34 for 60 capsules from Waitrose, Ocado and natural health stores.



Helps stop skin damage.