

Britain's leading health and wellbeing specialists answer your questions

Q+A

I am seven months' pregnant and am horrified to find what I think are varicose veins on my right leg. There are lots of purplish, raised veins and large broken capillaries. Will they get worse and can they be removed?

THE CONSULTANT VASCULAR SURGEON

MARK WHITELEY Wear support stockings while pregnant; in late pregnancy, increased blood volume and hormones can dilate surface veins. Three months after childbirth a duplex ultrasound scan will reveal if there is an underlying cause for the thread veins. Underlying veins are treated first, then comes microsclerotherapy to the thread veins: tiny, virtually painless injections.

THE GP RUPAL SHAH Varicose veins often present during pregnancy. To reduce discomfort, you may want to avoid standing for prolonged periods and to consider using compression stockings. A few months after you have had your baby you could consider treating the varicose veins, either with injections, laser or surgery. Unfortunately, treatment is usually not available on the NHS, since varicose veins are considered to be primarily a cosmetic problem.

THE NATUROPATH SUSAN CURTIS Add more rutin, a bioflavonoid, to your diet: it strengthens cells that build vein walls. A rich source is buckwheat. The homeopathic tissue salt Calc fluor 6x, from health shops, also helps improve blood-vessel elasticity. Mix horse-chestnut tincture with witch-hazel and apply to affected areas daily. Horse chestnut can be taken internally, with the circulatory tonics hawthorn and lime blossom, but not while you are still pregnant or breastfeeding.

When I am nervous I blush very easily, and sweat gathers on my upper lip. It's extremely embarrassing – particularly in work situations. I'm in my late twenties and I thought I would have grown out of this by now

THE GP HELEN STOKES-LAMPARD

Nervous? There are a few rare medical conditions that cause excessive sweating, such as hyperhidrosis, and those with severe underarm sweating are sometimes prescribed Botox, but this should be a last resort. To control stress-related sweating, the most common kind, it's best to deal with the underlying emotions. Relaxation techniques can help. Some foods, such as curries, can cause it: a food diary may help.

THE PSYCHOLOGIST

PETER KRUGER Blushing can be a sign of social anxiety, though this isn't always true. It often occurs when we perceive ourselves in a potentially embarrassing situation; the fear of blushing can itself be a trigger and exacerbate the problem. Try to identify typical situations when blushing and sweating are likely. Thought-restructuring techniques used in cognitive behavioural therapy may help you reappraise situations and control the problem.

THE HYPNOTHERAPIST

BONITA RAYNER-JONES Blushing is a habit; like any habit it can become worse with time, unless addressed. Hypnotherapy works by changing your physical response to certain situations so that you feel less self-conscious. Try to focus on the discussion and the other person, not yourself and your embarrassment. If you still feel sweating and blushing coming on, imagine the colour white and the sensation of ice-cold water on your face.



Always consult a medical practitioner if your symptoms persist. Send your health questions, for publication only, to stellahealth@telegraph.co.uk