



Mum-of-two Dr Ellie Cannon works in a busy inner city NHS practice and in private practice

Ask Dr Ellie...

Woman's GP Dr Ellie Cannon answers the burning questions in her surgery this week...

Is my niece in denial over her daughter's illness?

Q My niece's daughter, who is only six, has been diagnosed with leukaemia. This was a shock for all of the family, but my niece says she will be fine after treatment. I'm worried she is in denial.

A What a terrible shock for all of you and particularly your niece. Leukaemia is a type of cancer of the blood, affecting approximately 450 children a year in the UK, and the typical age to get it is six years old. The good news is that your

niece is more than likely right in staying positive: advances in treatment in leukaemia over the last 20 years have been amazing. Now, four out of five children treated are well five years after treatment and go on to live a normal life.

Of course, the treatment, which can last two years, will be gruelling and involve some unpleasant side-effects, but the chances are that your niece's daughter will be all right. Best of luck to your family.

My daughter's periods are so painful

Q My 12-year-old daughter has started her periods and every month they are very heavy and painful. She's not dealing with them very well and I don't want her to miss out at school, so is there anything that can help?

A This can be a difficult issue for a 12-year-old girl. For the pain, your daughter can try a variety of painkillers, available at the pharmacy. Try these one at a time, so she can see which one works best for her. I'd start off with ibuprofen – it lasts a good few hours, so it will see her through the school day. If this isn't enough, she can safely take paracetamol as well. The two in combination can provide effective, safe pain control.

Using a hot water bottle and wearing loose, comfy clothes can help when she's at home. For heavy periods, ensure she uses the most absorbent towels or tampons, so she's not going to worry about leakage and won't have to keep changing them. If the flow is still too heavy for her, ask your doctor for a tablet called tranexamic acid – this can reduce the amount of blood she loses.

Finally, make sure that she takes an iron supplement. This can reverse the anaemia that could be caused by very heavy periods.

*** Woman loves Well Teen Plus, £13.25 for 56 tablets, vitabiotics.com/WellTeen**

I feel I'm losing my mind

Q Since being made redundant at the end of last year, I've felt very anxious. Even small chores can make me worry and everyday tasks are a strain. I'm only 47 and have always been very capable up until now. Could I be losing my mind?

A No, you are not! You are, more than likely, suffering from anxiety as a reaction to losing your job. I see this a lot in my practice, especially since the recession started to bite. Failing to cope with little things is a classic sign of anxiety, and you're not alone. It's the most common form of mental distress, with a combination of anxiety and depression affecting over 9% of the population. Speak to your GP, who can fully assess how severe your anxiety has become and whether or not you need treatment – counselling, therapy or, possibly, medication.

Am I diabetic?

Q My GP asked me to have a blood test as I am overweight and now says my glucose levels are high and I need further monitoring and tests. I'm confused, because he said I seem to be glucose-intolerant. Does this mean I'm diabetic?

A No, but you could be heading there. GPs within the NHS have become very keen on glucose level testing because we now know that even if you're not diabetic, the stage beforehand, where you become intolerant of glucose, also puts you at risk.

I assume you had a fasting test and blood tests after drinking a sugary drink. Your results mean your body's own insulin is not dealing with sugar properly, which is similar to diabetes, but the numbers are not at diabetic levels yet. The typical glucose-intolerant patient is middle-aged and overweight. Have a look at your diet and exercise because this condition *is* reversible if you can lose some weight. Once you develop diabetes, it is not reversible.

PHOTOS: ALAMY, DR ELLIE REGRETS SHE CANNOT ANSWER LETTERS PERSONALLY.

3 WAYS TO BOOST YOUR HEALTH THIS WEEK

The scientists have spoken! Try these tips for a healthier life...



Have a laugh

A good laugh is like a mini-workout and 100-200 laughs are the health equivalent to 10 minutes of jogging, says US cardiologist Dr William Fry. Research also shows that it lowers levels of stress hormones and heightens the body's natural defences.

Sweet tooth

Sweets approved by the British Dental Association? It's true! New sugar-free Tingz (£8.50 for nine 15g bags, peppersmith.co.uk) contain xylitol, a natural sweetener said to reduce tooth decay.



Oil up...

Just putting olive oil on the dinner table could help you stay slim, as the smell makes us feel full! Volunteers who ate a 500g yogurt with olive oil every day for three months consumed 200 fewer calories, and none gained weight.

