



The not-so-ugly truth about lumps and bumps

WORRY: But a lump on the neck is usually just a cyst that is blocking an oil gland

include night-time sweats and fever, fatigue, unexplained weight loss, itchy skin and rashes.

IN THE BOTTOM

MOST LIKELY: Piles
Professor William Steward, a specialist in colorectal cancer and professor of oncology at the University of Leicester, says: 'Piles, or haemor-

rhoids, are swollen blood vessels on the inside of the anal canal, and affect up to one in four adults. There are different types, some of which can't be seen and others which are larger and protrude, forming lumps on the outside. They can bleed, and cause itching and pain.'

TREATMENT: Soothing creams, ointments and suppositories may ease pain and itching. They can also

be removed via a procedure known as banding in which an elastic band is placed just above the pile. This will cut off the blood supply, causing it to shrink. Another non-surgical treatment, sclerotherapy, involves injecting them with an oily solution.

I did nothing and worried for a year

Jonathan Connor discovered a lump on his neck seven years ago.

'I remember feeling this strange raised bump on the side of my neck. It was slightly harder than the surrounding skin,' says Jonathan, 31, a public relations officer from Dollis Hill, North-West London.

'It was small initially but grew to half an inch and it became inflamed if my shirt collar rubbed against it. I was worried about it, but I left it for about a year – during which time it

got slightly larger – before finally seeing my GP, who examined it and said that it was a sebaceous cyst. The relief was overwhelming. A specialist confirmed the diagnosis and the cyst was removed under local anaesthetic.'

Nick Freeman, 53, a solicitor from Cheshire, had a bleeding and itching mole on his back.

'In March, I suddenly became aware of an itching lump in the middle of my back. I couldn't see it

properly in the mirror, so I asked my wife, Steph, to take a look. She said it was a mole that seemed to be bleeding. The alarm bells rang.

'I saw my GP who referred me to a dermatologist who took one look at it and removed it under local anaesthetic. I then had to wait an agonising week for the results of the biopsy to come back. Thankfully they were negative, though my consultant wants to see me every year to be on the safe side.'

WARNING SIGNS: Always see a doctor if you are passing blood. Sometimes piles can develop alongside bowel cancer due to a tumour stopping blood in the area draining back properly. Regular sufferers should still go if over-the-counter treatment is not effective in two weeks. Other symptoms of bowel cancer include constipation, diarrhoea, a feeling that you need to empty your bowels even when you have just done so, unexplained weight loss, lethargy and dizzy spells.

ON THE SHOULDER

MOST LIKELY: Lipoma
Lester Barr says: 'A lipoma is a soft, fatty, benign lump of fat cells most commonly found on the shoulders, though it can happen wherever there are fat cells. There is no particular cause and lipomas vary in size from pea-size to an inch in diameter.'

TREATMENT: Occasionally, a lipoma needs to be removed if it presses on a nerve and causes pain. This can be done under local anaesthetic.

WARNING SIGNS: If the lump or the pain grows – or starts to hurt – you should have it checked by your GP.

IN THE MOUTH

MOST LIKELY: Mouth ulcer
Dr Phil Stemmer, of the Teeth for Life clinic in London, says: 'Mouth ulcers are painful sores inside the mouth which are caused by injury from teeth, by brushing them too hard, stress, hormonal changes or simply being under the weather.'

TREATMENT: Pastilles, gels and patches are available to relieve the pain and create a barrier while the mouth ulcer heals. Gargling and swallowing soluble paracetamol relieves the pain and rinsing the mouth with iced water before a meal makes eating easier.

WARNING SIGNS: If you have an ulcer which does not get better after ten days, it needs further investigation. Check out any white patches in the mouth that do not rub off, particularly if they are red in the middle, or red patches with a white centre. These can also be a sign of cancer.

BREAST LUMP

MOST LIKELY: Fibroadenoma or cyst
Lester Barr, consultant breast cancer surgeon at the Genesis Breast Cancer Prevention Centre, Manchester, says: 'Around 90 per cent of breast lumps are benign, and it is sometimes referred to as benign breast disease [BBD]. For women under 30, growths tend to be fibroadenomas, painless mobile rubbery balls of benign tissue, usually about half and inch to an inch in size, which often form because of hormonal changes.'

'Cysts are fluid-filled sacs and so can feel more jelly-like, tender and often affect women in their 30s and 40s. They can also feel hard, like a marble or pea under the skin with a smooth, round surface. Cysts cannot become cancer, but women with multiple cysts have "active" breast tissue so they should be vigilant as they are more at risk.'

TREATMENT: Fibroadenomas can be left unless they become painful or more than an inch in size, and about ten per cent disappear, sometimes after menopause. They are usually confirmed by ultrasound or a mammogram and removed by draining fluid from the cyst with a syringe.

WARNING SIGNS: Always get a lump checked, as even for specialists it can be difficult to verify what a growth is without a mammogram or biopsy. It is also important to get breasts checked if they change in shape, size, feel, or if there is any puckering, dimpling, redness of the skin or nipple, discharge, or if there is pain or discomfort that affects just one breast.

Feeling stressed? Relax with a slice of melon...

By **Jill Foster**

From the common cantaloupe and honeydew to the lesser spotted Santa Claus and Sharlyn, there are thousands of varieties of melon on the market, with more than 1,200 watermelons alone.

It was reported recently that melons grown in the Midlands are about to go on sale, thanks in part to the warmer climate in the UK. And while you may think that these fat, fleshy fruits of the Cucurbitaceae family are little more than water and sugar, they are surprisingly high in health-boosting goodness, too.

'Melons are great for hydration – the cantaloupe is 93.6 per cent water, while watermelons are 94 per cent water – but they are also packed with nutrients,' says Sian Porter, of the British Dietetic Association. 'An 80g portion of cantaloupe will give you half the recommended daily dose of Vitamin C. They are high in beta-carotene, which helps keep your immune system and eyesight healthy. High intakes have also been linked to a reduced risk of heart disease, lung cancer, cataracts, Alzheimer's and type 2 diabetes.'

Melons are also very low in calories, with only 19 to 31 per 100g, so they're great for watching your weight.'

Last year, French scientists found that melons are rich in the superoxide dismutase enzyme, which is thought to have beneficial antioxidant properties that prevent damage to the body's tissue.

Volunteers given a capsule of the enzyme reported fewer symptoms of stress and fatigue than those given a dummy capsule.

'Melons are also good for pregnant women as they are rich in folate, which has been proven to help reduce birth defects,' says dietician Katie Peck. 'Folate is a B vitamin that significantly reduces the risk of neural tube defects such as spina bifida. A 100g portion of cantaloupe contains 21mcg of folate. They're also rich in potassium, which helps maintain healthy blood pressure.'

Watermelon is also rich in lycopene, another carotenoid, which may have protective effects against colon and prostate cancers and cardiovascular disease.

