

Feel Better—Stat!

The first hint of an ache, pain, itch, or cramp is quickly followed by a pang of anxiety—after all, who can afford to feel anything but 100 percent in today’s crazy-busy world?

Thankfully, research has uncovered a ton of natural ways to nix common ailments, if you act as soon as they pop up. Follow this fast-action guide to fending off minor health woes.


By Faye Brennan



As soon as you detect a... **HEADACHE**

Put down your smartphone. A recent study found that people hold their mobiles way too close to their faces when texting or surfing online, which can strain the eyes. That, in turn, may lead to a head pounder.


If that doesn't work...



Take a time-out. Tightness across your temple could signal a tension headache caused by stress, says *WH* advisor Keri Peterson, M.D., a physician at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City. Retreat to a quiet corner—even a bathroom stall will do!—and use your fingertips to massage your forehead in a circular motion. As you knead, take five slow, deep breaths; inhale through your nose, exhale through your mouth. Pause, then repeat.

If that doesn't work...

Head for the herbals. Research in the journal *Headache* revealed that holding anti-inflammatory ginger-feverfew gel under your tongue for 60 seconds—then swallowing—can curb early headache pain. Feverfew capsules or ginger tea may also work. Still not better? Pop a couple of ibuprofen.



Chug water. Just being mildly dehydrated can cause a severe headache, per a 2012 study in *The Journal of Nutrition*. Drinking down a full eight ounces of H₂O may quell throbbing in minutes.

If that doesn't work...

As soon as you detect... **IRRITATION** "down there"

And It's External...



Switch your undies. Your lady parts are very sensitive to excess wetness, so keep them dry by wearing cotton. "It wicks moisture away from the skin, unlike most synthetic fibers," says *WH* advisor Shari Brasner, M.D., an assistant clinical professor of gynecology at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine.

If that doesn't work...



Apply an ointment. Frequent wiping or vigorous intercourse can annoy the delicate skin of your vagina, says Brasner. Head to your pharmacy's baby-care aisle for a topical petroleum jelly-based diaper-rash ointment, which can help protect and heal the area.

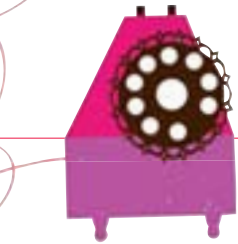
If that doesn't work...

Tame the yeast. Vaginal itching is the hallmark of a yeast infection, which is often accompanied by a cottage cheese-like discharge, says Brasner. Try an over-the-counter antifungal cream or suppository to clear it up in three to seven days. Pair with an over-the-counter antihistamine, like diphenhydramine, to calm the itch factor.

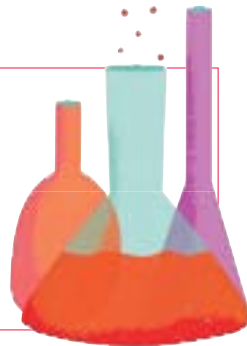
If that doesn't work...

And It's Internal...

Call your doctor. Burning or irritation when you pee can mean you have a urinary tract infection, which can be treated only with prescribed antibiotics, not cranberry juice or tablets, according to a study from the University of Stirling in Scotland. While you wait for your prescription, an OTC product containing the numbing agent phenazopyridine can ease your discomfort and pain.



Get tested. Your M.D. can figure out the cause of the irritation, give you proper treatment, and rule out the possibility of an STD.



As soon as you detect...

HEARTBURN

Stand up. Since heartburn is often caused by acid reflux—i.e., stomach acid creeping up your esophagus—you'll want to stay vertical to slow or subdue the upward flow.

If that doesn't work...

Grab some gum. *The Journal of Dental Research* reported that people who chewed sugar-free gum for 30 minutes had reduced amounts of acid in their esophagi. The reason? Constant chewing creates more saliva, which makes you swallow more, which helps wash down the reflux.

If that doesn't work...

Seek an OTC aid. Head to the closest pharmacy for some over-the-counter antacids in tablet or liquid form. Their main ingredient, aluminum hydroxide, neutralizes acid. (Just be warned: Popping these like candy can lead to gnarly side effects like diarrhea or, in rare cases, kidney stones; see your M.D. if you have chronic heartburn.)

As soon as you detect a... **MUSCLE CRAMP**

Step on a cold floor. Or limp to your fridge for an ice pack, says Peterson. Studies show chilly temps block pain pathways in the muscles and can reduce spasms in your thighs, calves, or feet.

If that doesn't work...

Swig some pickle juice. Weird but true: A study in *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise* found that sipping it can alleviate cramps within seconds. Researchers think an ingredient in the juice ignites a neurological reaction that helps calm muscle spasms.

If that doesn't work...

Fill up on electrolytes. Low levels of calcium, magnesium, and potassium often cause muscle cramps, says Peterson. Coconut water or a banana will help replenish these compounds within 10 minutes. Then stretch until the ache stops.