

# COSMOPOLITAN

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## Block That Kick. The Case for Saying No to Casual Sex

## Controlling Hunger to Make Dieting Bearable

## Look Before You Weep! What Women Should Know About Getting Ahead at the Office

## Why Marriage After 30 Works Best

## What You Don't See When You See 60 Minutes By the Feisty Genius Who Created It

## Are You Decadent? (A Quiz)

## When He Wants Children and You Don't

## Excerpt from Lucky, Jackie Collins's New Blockbuster Novel Plus Thelma & Louise, a Giltzy Novel About Television



### Can an expectant mother's exercise regimen be damaging to her unborn child?

**A.** Exercise appears to be safe—indeed, beneficial—during pregnancy, although study results have been inconclusive. The best way to approach pregnancy is to get into shape *before* it begins and, then, to maintain a comfortable exercise schedule. As a woman's due date approaches, weight-bearing exercise, such as jogging and aerobics, becomes increasingly uncomfortable and is more likely to strain abdominal muscles and injure hips, knees, and ankles. Most doctors recommend swimming, cycling, and walking to keep in shape until late in pregnancy.

**Q.** What kinds of problems does a podiatrist treat, and who would benefit from seeing this kind of specialist?

**A.** Podiatrists do much more than remove corns, calluses, and ingrown toenails. Their training emphasizes correcting the *cause* of foot pain—often a structural abnormality or muscle imbalance—through surgery in the office or hospital, a cast, or an orthotic (a custom-made shoe insert that changes the way the body weight falls on the foot).

Elderly patients, victims of diabetes or arthritis, and toddlers with gait abnormalities comprise most of podiatrists' patients, but even healthy, active adults may benefit from their expertise. Many specialize in treating runners, dancers, and aerobic enthusiasts, all of whom are vulnerable to foot and leg pain arising from improper shoes, poor gait, overzealous workouts, and hidden bone deformities.

To find a qualified sports specialist, check with a local runners' club or health spa. Any thorough evaluation should include a five- to ten-minute observation of your walking and an examination of the shoes you wear. Beware of a practitioner who insists on multiple X-rays—often not necessary. Complicated foot disorders may require a costly orthotic; simple ones often disappear when a healthy style of shoe is substituted for a damaging one.

**Q.** A doctor on a television talk show claimed you can lose weight by finding out what foods you are allergic to and staying away from them. Is this true? How can I learn which are my "problem foods"?

**A.** I doubt that a food allergy could cause weight gain; on the contrary,

severe allergies can cause weight loss. In the condition called celiac sprue, for instance, a reaction to a substance called gluten, present in wheat, damages intestinal-lining cells and prevents the victim from absorbing nutrients. You may have "problem" foods, but the problem is probably excess calories.

**Q.** I have a lot of dark hair on my upper lip, chest, and abdomen. What might be causing this and how can I get rid of it?

**A.** The medical name for your problem is *hirsutism*, which means growth of hair (other than on the scalp) excessive enough to be cosmetically unacceptable to a woman. The condition should be evaluated by a doctor; often, hirsutism is a mild, hereditary nuisance, but at other times it may be a warning of a serious hormonal imbalance or even a tumor.

Each hair follicle on the body produces either a vellus hair (short, fine, and fuzzy) or a terminal hair (longer, coarser, and pigmented), depending on its sensitivity to the "male" hormone androgen. Any condition—overactive adrenal glands, tumor of the adrenal or ovary, polycystic ovaries, certain biochemical or chromosomal disorders—that elevates the amount of androgens in the circulation can bring on hirsutism, as can some drugs. Often, results of medical exams and blood tests done to check for these disorders are negative—meaning the problem is caused by mildly elevated androgen levels that can be brought into line with birth-control pills or other hormone medications.

Once you've been checked, you can eliminate excess hair temporarily by bleaching, plucking, waxing, shaving, or depilation. Only electrolysis, which sometimes leaves a tiny, pitlike scar around the follicle, will permanently rid you of the growth.

**Q.** My best friend's husband developed a severe headache one night while they were making love; soon after, he had to have brain surgery to repair a leaking blood vessel. What can cause this kind of leakage?

**A.** Hemorrhages such as the one you describe usually stem from a saccular or berry aneurysm, a thin-walled blister thought to start at a weak spot on one of the small arteries supplying blood to the brain. Bleeding—via leakage or a burst

## YOUR body

By Susan Okie, M.D.

aneurysm—occurs most often in adults between thirty-five and sixty-five years of age, usually without warning and often when some form of exertion temporarily raises blood pressure.

Some victims lose consciousness at once; others develop an excruciating headache but remain awake or pass out sometime later. Weakness of a limb or one side of the body, numbness, changes in vision, and disturbed speech may accompany the attack.

Once a saccular aneurysm bleeds, it is very likely to bleed again. For this reason, treatment usually emphasizes absolute bed rest in a hospital for a few weeks, followed by surgery to clip or tie off the weak spot in the artery.

**Q.** I've been hearing a lot about a new drug called Ecstasy. What is this substance? Is it safe—or even legal?

**A.** Ecstasy is the nickname for the drug 3, 4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine, or MDMA. In July, its escalating street use prompted the Federal Drug Enforcement Agency to declare it illegal—in the same category with heroin—on an emergency basis for up to eighteen months. The agency's action unleashed loud protests from a small group of psychotherapists who say they have found it valuable in treating patients.

The claims made for MDMA, chemically related to amphetamines and mescaline, are intriguing. Proponents say it encourages intimacy and removes fears that prevent people from facing their problems. According to Dr. Lester Grinspoon, a Harvard psychiatrist, it puts users powerfully in touch with feelings of love and significantly enhances their capacity for empathy.

MDMA can have unpleasant short-term side effects, however, and its long-term consequences on the brain and body are unknown. Common immediate effects include nausea and vomiting, tightness of jaw muscles, blurry vision, and a rise in pulse and blood pressure. It also causes anxiety, severe panic, or paranoia in some users.

Dr. Ronald Siegel of UCLA, a psychopharmacologist who studies hallucinogens, considers Ecstasy more dangerous than LSD and says publicity has caused such a burgeoning demand that drug dealers may be forced to substitute other drugs for MDMA—particularly the treacherous PCP, or "angel dust." ☐