



HEALTH TIPS

The magnesium in sunflower seeds is known to soothe the nerves, thus easing away stress, migraines and helping you relax



Pumpkin seeds are a rich source of zinc, a mineral which helps with cell growth and division

ASK THE EXPERT

DR MAHINDER WATSA



1 I am 37 years old and my girlfriend is 36. I like performing oral sex on her. She has warts on her vagina. Is it safe for us to indulge in oral sex? How are warts formed? Does my family member get affected by the spoon that I eat or by touching any utensils?

Warts are caused by a virus. They spread very quickly so stop your activity with your partner. She must get checked by a skin specialist. Warts have a tendency to reappear. Family members are infected by close contact.

2 I am 17 years old. I have not got my period for the last six months. I masturbate almost every day. Is masturbating the reason for the delay? Should I see a doctor? How can I stop masturbating?

Masturbation is not the cause. Please see a gynaecologist, immediately. Masturbate only when sexually excited. There is no need to stop.

3 I am 30 and my wife is 25. We got married 10 months ago. We are yet to have intercourse. We enjoy sex with our undergarments on. Is this habit normal? We wear the same undergarments the entire night after the act. However, mine gets wet due to ejaculation. We do this as we are don't want a child so early and I don't like to wear a condom.

Why should you wear undergarments when efficient contraceptives are available? Visit a gynaecologist. Your wife can safely take a low dose hormone tablet.

4 I am 43 years old and have two children. I have been married for 15 years. For the last one year, I have observed that my frequency of sex has drastically increased and it happens almost every alternate days. Is it normal? I am worried if this will affect my health.

Maybe you are normal, but you must get yourself checked by an andrologist.

SEND YOUR QUERIES TO: Ask the Sexpert, Mumbai Mirror, Times Of India Building, Dr D N Road, Mumbai 400001 or email at drwatsa@timesgroup.com. Contact Dr Watsa, send an email to mcwatsa@hotmail.com

Time to move on

You may be a creature of habit, but some seemingly innocuous everyday items of personal use may have outlived their time. Experts tell you when to discard them

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Wake up after a good night's sleep only to a morning bout of sneezing? Unable to figure out why you keep itching despite being a hygiene freak? The answer often lies in the unlikeliest of places. If you're the kind who has developed an emotional attachment to that lucky towel you've had for a year, or believe that washing your bed linen twice a month is good enough, read up.

TIME TO DISCARD
Every 3 months
TOOTHBRUSH

This one is relatively easy. Damaged bristles is a sign that you need to change your brush, and some toothbrushes even come with built-in indicators that change colour when it is time to get a new replacement. Dentist Dr Sameera Ali says, "If you keep using a toothbrush beyond its life span, it won't work as effectively, causing tartar and bacteria buildup. You think you're brushing, but in effect it isn't doing you any good."

Dr Sitesh Roy, a US Board certified allergist, immunologist and asthma specialist, also advises you discard your toothbrush the moment you recover from a viral infection, regardless of how new it may be as "the viral antigens may make your toothbrush a home, and cause another infection."



TIME TO DISCARD
A year
TOWEL

If you're not ready to replace your expensive Turkish towel just yet, think again. "Your towel can be a major source of irritants or allergens," warns Dr Roy. It all comes down to how often you wash it, and how well it dries after. "Ideally, wash your towel every alternate day and ensure it is completely dry, preferably sun-dried. The heat from the dryer might damage the fabric in the long run, but is known to kill bacteria too," he adds. Damp towels promote mould growth which cause allergies. Also, body odour-causing bacteria often get stuck in the towel, so discard it the moment the towel starts emitting a foul odour or begins to fray.

TIME TO DISCARD
6 months to a year
PILLOW COVER

Your pillow cover may just be giving you a stuffy nose every morning without you realising

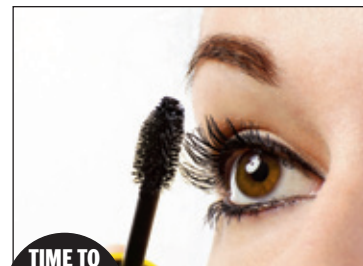


it. "The human body always has some bacteria on it, and if you think about it, you spend a substantial time every night in contact with your pillow cover," says Dr Jaishree Sharad, dermatologist. "Even if it is seemingly clean, your pillow cover has dust mites, especially from your hair. This gives rise to various problems such as allergies, rashes, and acne," she says. Dr Sharad suggests that the pillow cover be washed



every alternate day, and given this routine, the cover will last you a year, after which it should be discarded. Dr Roy concurs. "The Mumbai weather causes high mould and fungal growth, so beddings can be potential reservoirs of allergies.

Change your pillow every two years and the mattress every five years," he says.



TIME TO DISCARD
6 months to a year
MASCARA

"Using the mascara beyond a certain time causes a host of problems, such as rashes along the upper eyelid that may spread to the lower lids, swelling of the eyes, fungal infections, dark circles due to pigmentation, itchiness and may ultimately cause you to lose your lashes," warns Dr Sharad. "The constant application, opening and putting back the brush into the product can cause infections, caused by the transfer of bacteria from the skin to the product, which then multiplies if left over a long period of time."



TIME TO DISCARD
A year
LIPSTICK

Use and discard your lipstick within the year, else get ready to deal with blisters, rashes, pigmentation and dry, chapped lips. "This is especially true for matte and dark coloured lipsticks, such as reds, oranges and maroons which don't come off easily," says Dr Sharad. "Refrain from using these dark colours daily. Those who have sensitive lips or dark lips would do better by staying away from flavoured lip balms. Go for the non-menthol, non-flavoured, plain ones instead.



TIME TO DISCARD
Within 2 months
LOOFAH

"Unless you change the loofah regularly, it can lead to rashes on your body," says Dr Roy. It does not matter if you suffer from a skin infection or not, sweating and perspiration can cause infections via the loofah, and it is best avoided altogether if you have sensitive skin or any existing skin condition. "Friction aggravates skin problems and can cause fungal infections and flaking, which gets trapped in the loofah. Also, if a part of your body has an infection, using the loofah could cause it to spread to other parts," says Dr Roy. Just like the towel, it is important the loofah is completely dried out after use.

TIME TO DISCARD
6 months to a year
COMB

"Using a dirty comb causes bacterial infections like boils on the scalp and painful, pus-filled bumps," says Dr Sharad. Maintain a healthy scalp by washing the combs in hot water once a week, and changing them every year. "Use a wide-bristled, straight combed brush as it can be easily cleaned," adds Dr Roy. "Flat and roller brushes are more difficult to clean and can cause chronic dandruff. If you've just completed any treatment for dermatitis or dandruff, change your combs immediately."

