

A change in me

CRUSTY NAILS PUT MEN OFF!

HEMA KANANI, 33, Bromley, Kent

MY PROBLEM

I loved long nails and used to have false ones glued on. The only trouble was they were hard to remove, sometimes pulling off layers of the natural nail with them.

After a year of using them, a real nail on my right hand turned yellow. 'It's a fungal infection,' a nail technician said. She gave me lotion to paint on the nail to try to kill the infection but warned me it might spread.

That bothered me. I think men look at a woman's nails to see how she maintains herself.

So when two more nails went yellow, I stopped using false ones.

But it was too late. My damaged nails looked ragged, with dirty yellow crusts underneath and at the sides – and they hurt.

Over-the-counter remedies didn't help, and my GP said oral treatments would be bad for my liver so wouldn't prescribe them.



Before



My nails now

WHAT WORKED

Looking online, I found a nail laser clinic in London. The treatments were expensive but sounded promising, so I booked myself in.

At the appointment, a therapist cut all my nails right down. Then she zapped the infected ones with a blue-light laser that made me jump.

Afterwards, she handed me some antifungal cream. 'You must keep using this,' she instructed.

Weeks later the yellow faded, so I stopped using the cream. But the crusts and yellowing returned.

Back at the clinic, I had a cold laser treatment called Lunula on

all 10 nails, placing my hands inside a machine for three minutes. I was also given an antifungal cream to use each time I washed my hands.

In total I spent £600 on laser treatments and creams, but six months on I'm a lot happier. The yellow's gone and my nails are pink and natural-looking. I'm confident about my hands again.



It cost a lot but it worked

DOCS IN THE HOUSE

Husband and wife team Dr Mike and Dr Louise tackle your problems – together

AGE DIFFERENCE

Q When I have a chesty cough I'm given antibiotics. But if my six-year-old has one, he gets paracetamol. Why is this?

DR MIKE There are several different types of antibiotics. They kill bacteria, or prevent them multiplying, leaving your immune system to do the rest.

DR LOUISE Chest infections are fairly common in adults, especially if they smoke. I prefer to prescribe penicillin-based antibiotics, unless my patients are allergic, as they're safe, effective and inexpensive.

DR MIKE Children's coughs tend to be caused by viruses, for which antibiotics are ineffective. Paracetamol will help lower your son's temperature while his immune system fights the virus naturally.

BUNGED UP

Q Both my children suffer with constipation. What can I give them?

DR LOUISE Constipation is common in kids, usually because they don't eat enough fibre. Get them to eat more fruit and veg, especially peas and beans. Bran or wholewheat cereals are excellent for fibre too.

DR MIKE I never recommend senna for kids as it can cause stomach cramps. Syrup of figs and prunes should help – if they'll take them.

DR LOUISE Failing that, your GP can prescribe gentle laxatives. I usually start with a low dose, and gradually increase the dose if that doesn't do the trick.

DO IT THIS WEEK! Start drinking green tea – it could help protect against Alzheimer's as it has chemicals which wipe up the free radicals that damage nerve cells.

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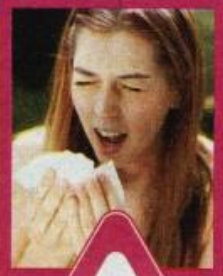


The UK is more allergy prone than ever. A quarter of adults and half of all kids have an allergy. But why is this?

The basics An allergic reaction is when the immune system reacts to something harmless as if it were a threat. It makes an antibody, which lets loose aggressive chemicals called histamines.

Sensitive in seconds Histamines soon cause swelling, itching, burning, wheezing and sneezing, and can dangerously tighten our airways.

The main culprits These are pollen, dust mites and pets. Less common ones include eggs, nuts and latex but there are lots more.



Why the rise? It's not certain, though some families are more sensitive due to their genes. However, allergies are now so prolific that genes don't explain the whole picture.

Is diet a factor? Perhaps. We eat less fruit and vegetables, and more processed food than before – so we get fewer nutrients. But studies into whether extra nutrients reduce allergies are inconclusive.

Too clean? Detergents contain antimicrobial agents, so maybe our homes are now so hygienic that our immune systems don't know how to respond to dirt and germs appropriately.

So... The advice remains to avoid whatever substance irritates you – but see your doctor too.

