

OUR CHRISTMAS ESSENTIALS MADE EASY

1st choice
for fiction

16th December 2008

Woman's Weekly

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20
tips &
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and lows



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kings are
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charity
that's still
saving lives

FROM OUR
KITCHEN

Save-the-day Christmas standbys

★ Lemony mince pies ★ Mulled cranberry jelly ★ Vegetarian roulade



6 ways to avoid dizziness

- 1 Drink plenty of non-alcoholic liquids to avoid dehydration.
- 2 Keep your blood-sugar levels up by making sure you eat regular meals.
- 3 Get enough sleep — as extreme tiredness often causes dizziness.
- 4 Avoid sudden changes of position (eg, getting up too quickly from lying down or standing still for too long).
- 5 Reduce stress with exercise and relaxation, or by removing the cause.
- 6 If you take medication, check the side effects on the information leaflet.

...ive can control this, but you may need surgery to resolve it completely.

Postural hypotension

When we stand up, our circulatory reflexes counteract gravity, so that our brains still have a good blood supply. But if we stand still for too long, especially if we're hot, dehydrated or haven't eaten a meal, we can start to feel dizzy; this can happen if we jump out of bed, or get up too quickly. Some drugs (used for high blood pressure, incontinence or depression, for example) also interfere with these reflexes. However, once you realise what's causing it, postural hypotension is often easy to avoid.

Vertigo

Vertigo is the brain's way of protecting its blood supply by forcing us into a horizontal position. If you feel light-headed, the best thing to do is sit or lie down immediately.

Cervical spondylosis

Wear-and-tear arthritis in the neck, or stiff neck movements may press on the nerves in the neck, producing brief dizziness. Learning to move your neck slowly and using the trick in solving this.

What you may need

If dizziness is severe or persistent, or linked with other symptoms, such as pins and needles, or balance problems, you'll need to see your GP. Depending on your symptoms, this could include tests, a heart tracing (ECG) or monitoring of your blood pressure, or a brain scan if the cause isn't clear.

This week I've been asked...

Q I've got trigeminal neuralgia and my GP has given me an epilepsy drug, but the pain's still terrible. Would an ordinary painkiller work better?

A The trigeminal nerves run from junction boxes in the brain and control facial sensation. Trigeminal neuralgia (TGN) is due to abnormal nerve signals caused by pressure, or degenerative changes in the nerve, and affects only one side. These produce severe, frequent "electric shock" pains, often triggered by movement, touch, or chewing. The pain can be truly awful, and because the nerve is damaged, ordinary painkillers don't help. TGN can go away, but sometimes returns. Treatment aims to block the abnormal signals with epilepsy drugs, such as carbamazepine and gabapentin, or the antidepressant, amitriptyline. Check with your GP whether you can increase your dose or change your drug. If drugs don't work, an injection into the nerve



or its junction box in the brain, under anaesthetic, or surgery to relieve any pressure, may help. Stereotactic surgery (also called the gamma knife) uses radiation to attack the junction box, and provides immediate pain relief for up to 90 per cent of sufferers.

Q I'm due to have a mastectomy for breast cancer. Should I have reconstruction at the same time?

A Making a quick decision at such a stressful time is very difficult, so you need as much information as possible — and do talk it over with close family or friends.

A free DVD from the Queen Victoria Hospital in East Grinstead could help, as it explains the available options, with photographs showing what your breast could look like afterwards. It includes interviews with surgeons, breast-care nurses and real-life cases, and follows one woman's journey.

One option is to have a silicone or expanding implant inserted under the muscles in your chest wall, to give a realistic shape; another is a *latissimus dorsi* flap, which uses your own skin and muscle to create a new breast shape (with or without an implant). TRAM and DIEP flaps are bigger operations and use skin, fat and muscle from your tummy, but are only available in centres with a plastic surgery department. A new nipple is constructed or tattooed on later.

Ask your specialist breast-care nurse to get you a copy of the DVD, or you can order a copy by calling the Queen Victoria Hospital on 01342 306662, or from www.breastreconstructionforlife.org.uk

Advice on the telephone — can we help?

Our phone lines give you access to professionals who can give you personal advice.

Dr Melanie Wynne-Jones helplines (last approx. four minutes)

Stress.....	0904 470 0681
Migraine.....	0904 470 0682
IBS.....	0904 470 0683
Varicose Veins.....	0904 470 0684
Heartburn.....	0904 470 0685
Heavy Periods.....	0904 470 0686

Jan de Vries alternative health lines (last approx. three minutes)

Flus and Colds.....	0904 470 0816
Detoxification.....	0904 470 0817
Tiredness.....	0904 470 0818
Allergies.....	0904 470 0819
Viral Conditions.....	0904 470 0820
Memory Problems.....	0904 470 0821

BT calls cost 65p per minute. Cost from other networks may be higher. Service provider: Eckoh (UK) Ltd, Herts HP3 9HN.

We cannot offer individual advice or see individual patients. Advice given here is for general information only. Please seek help from your own GP if you have a medical problem.

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