

Chipped tooth? Do visit the dentist



YOUR HEALTH

DR GITA MATHAI

Q I bit into a hard bone and a piece of my tooth chipped off. It is not painful, so can I just leave it be?

No. Once a tooth's protective enamel is chipped or broken, even if there is no pain, the vulnerable inner layers of the tooth are exposed to bacteria in the mouth. This significantly increases the risk of tooth decay, infection and eventual death of the tooth. If left untreated, the damage may progress to the point where root canal treatment or even extraction becomes necessary.

Unlike other tissues in the body, teeth cannot heal or regenerate themselves. It is therefore important to see a dentist as soon as possible. If you have found the broken fragment of the tooth, keep it safe and take it with you to the appointment, as it may be possible to reattach it.

Prickly heat

Q I have itchy prickly heat on my back.

Prickly heat or heat rash usually improves if you keep your skin cool and dry. Take two showers each day, especially after sweating. Gently wash your back with a mild medicated soap using a soft loofah or washcloth but avoid vigorous scrubbing as this can further irritate the skin. Avoid applying heavy creams, oily lotions or "prickly heat" powders, as all these can block sweat ducts and make the rash worse. Instead, apply calamine

lotion or pure aloe vera gel to soothe the itching. Wear breathable loose-fitting cotton or linen clothing.

Hard nails

Q My toenails are very hard and difficult to cut.

Hard toenails can be softened by soaking your feet in warm water with a little salt and baking soda for 10-15 minutes before trimming them. Dry your feet thoroughly, then cut the nails straight across using a good-quality nail clipper designed for thick nails.

Watery eyes

Q My eyes water. It is embarrassing because people often ask if I am crying.

Check if it consistently happens in one or both eyes. If only one eye is affected, it may be due to a blocked tear duct, an injury or foreign body in the eye, an inward-growing eyelash, or a swelling on the eyelid. If both eyes water, the cause may be a common cold, allergies or conjunctivitis. Persistent watering should not be ignored.

Acne treatment

Q I have acne, and I am tired of using medications.

Incorporate gentle facial steaming into your skincare routine. Steam your face for five minutes once a day using a facial steamer or by carefully leaning over a bowl of hot water with a towel draped over your head. The steam helps open the pores, softens sebum and loosens debris that can block pores and contribute to acne. If your acne is severe and painful, see a dermatologist.



The writer has a family practice at Vellore and is the author of *Staying Healthy in Modern India*. If you have questions on health issues, write to yourhealthgm@yahoo.co.in