

Knee pain and young complainants



**YOUR
HEALTH**

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Q I am 19 years old and have pain in the front of my left knee, especially while climbing stairs.

This sounds like patellofemoral pain syndrome, a common condition in young people. It is unlikely to be arthritis unless you have previously injured your knee or undergone knee surgery. For relief:

- Avoid squatting, climbing stairs and jumping for at least 10 days
- Apply a capsaicin-containing ointment twice daily
- Use an ice pack for 4-5 minutes every two hours
- Take a mild pain reliever such as paracetamol or ibuprofen if needed.

If there is no improvement after 10 days, consult an orthopaedic surgeon.

Pain and pus

Q I have painful boils in both armpits. They burst and discharge foul-smelling pus.

This may be a condition called *Hidradenitis Suppurativa* or *Acne Inversa*. It is a chronic, non-contagious inflammatory skin disease, and the armpits are the most common sites affected. It is not caused by poor hygiene.

It is difficult to cure but can be controlled. Apply warm compresses twice a day, take pain relievers such as paracetamol or NSAIDs like ibuprofen. In more severe cases, antibiotics or even surgical treatment may be necessary.

Feet ache

Q I am 60 years old and have pain in both my feet when I walk.

By the age of 60, your feet will have carried you for many thousands of kilometres. Over time, the supporting pads in the feet thin out (atrophy), the bones weaken, and the strain on them can increase, especially if you are overweight. Always wear well-cushioned footwear, even inside the house. Check your Vitamin D3 levels and

bone mineral density; if they are low, treatment may be needed. Apply ice packs to your feet in the morning and evening to reduce pain and inflammation. If there is no improvement, consult a doctor for further evaluation.

Stubborn kilos

Q I follow all the recommendations for diet and exercise, but I have not lost any weight.

One common reason is hidden calories. When calculating food intake, it's easy to overlook calories from oils, fats, sauces and snacks. To lose weight, you need a calorie deficit of at least 500 calories per day. Another issue may be overestimating exercise. Walking is excellent, but the body adapts over time. Try adding short bursts of high-intensity activity (brisk walking, jogging or stair climbing for a few minutes) in between your regular walks. This can boost metabolism and help break through weight-loss plateaus.

Knee surgery

Q I have been advised bilateral knee replacement. I am scared.

Usually, one knee is operated on first, and the second six weeks to six months later. Knee replacement is generally safe, but like all major surgeries it carries some risks.

The lifespan of a replaced knee is about 25 years. If you are younger, you may require a second replacement. The chances of a successful outcome are much higher if you undergo physiotherapy to strengthen the muscles around the joint both before and after surgery.

Thyroid levels

Q I take my thyroid medication regularly. However, my lab results still show fluctuating thyroid levels. I am also anaemic.

Iron interferes with the absorption of thyroid tablets. If you are taking iron supplements, take your thyroid medication as usual on an empty stomach in the morning, and the iron supplement after dinner. This may help improve absorption and stabilise your thyroid levels.

